

الْقُرْآنُ الْكَرِيمُ
وَكَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعَلْيَا

THE
ASCENDANT QUR'AN
Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture

VOLUME 4
Āl 'Imrān:1-120



Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Āṣī



In the Name of Allah,
the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful

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Muḥammad H. al-Āṣī

THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT
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Allah (ﷻ) says in His noble Book,
“Verily, Allah and His Angels send salutations on the Apostle.
O You who are firmly committed [to Allah], you too [must]
send the most worthy salutations and blessings upon him.”
(Sūrah al-Aḥzāb:56)

In launching this *tafsīr*, we beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless His final Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), all the Prophets (ﷺ) who preceded him, and all those who, despite great difficulty and sacrifice, sincerely follow in their footsteps from the *ṣāliḥūn*, the *ṣiddiqūn*, the *shuhadā'*, and *marḥūmūn*. We also beseech Allah (ﷻ) to bless and amply reward those who have helped in the publication of this *tafsīr* in whatever capacity.

— The Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought

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Publisher's Foreword

As we bring out additional volumes of the *tafsīr*, *The Ascendant Qur'an: Realigning Man to the Divine Power Culture*, by Imam Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Āṣī, we begin to realize the immensity of the challenge before us. What we initially thought would be a 20-volume *tafsīr* now appears likely to be twice as large. We got some inkling of this when *Sūrahs al-Fātiḥah* and *al-Baqarah* spanned over three volumes, instead of the two we had originally anticipated; and now, *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān* will be completed in two volumes instead of our initial estimate of one. Furthermore, it is likely that *Sūrahs al-Nisā'* and *al-Mā'idah* as well as the other *surahs* will similarly require more volumes than we had planned at the inception of this effort.

This is one dimension of the challenge facing us. The other, based on the now apparent size of the undertaking and the inevitable human feelings that shoulder the heavy burden, relates to whether we are equipped to handle such a task. This is not to suggest that we are having second thoughts about the project but that we are aware a project of this magnitude requires enormous material and human resources. Unfortunately, we are equipped with neither. Ordinarily, such a project would be undertaken by an

institution or an organization with hundreds of persons, if not more, working simultaneously. In the Institute of Contemporary Islamic Thought (ICIT), we have very limited staff. This again is related to lack of resources.

Consider the example of a medium-sized publishing house. Normally, a book of some 300 pages would not only have a managing editor but more than half a dozen or more other staff members that would review the material before it goes to press. And these individuals would be tasked with working full time on that one particular book. In our case, there are a handful of us that have to perform several tasks simultaneously: working on the *tafsir*, bringing out the *Crescent International* magazine once a month, participating in conferences in different parts of the world, and also dealing with Islamic activities locally. Beyond that, we have to work on other books, occasionally on short notice, as well as act as distributors and promoters of our existing literature.

This explanation is not offered to excuse ourselves from these responsibilities we have willingly accepted, but to alert our friends and well-wishers to the fact that such work needs help and support. We know Muslims are not short of resources; often these are not properly utilized. One can cite examples of how most resources are used either for providing relief to suffering Muslims in different parts of the world, or for building huge *masjids*. Both are important in their own right (although the second is putting the cart before the horse); providing the healing touch cannot be ignored — but Muslims must also pay attention to creating the environment to facilitate a paradigm shift that prevents future Palestines and Afghanistans. This will require nurturing ensuing generations of enlightened Muslims that will take on the challenges facing them. Let us be precise: Muslims face a far greater threat from alien ideas than from guns and bullets. We have seldom been defeated by overwhelming military might; our primary failure has been in the realm of accepting bad ideas that have no connection to truth.

This *tafsir* enables us to make the paradigm shift to help create the Qur'anic generation that would take on the world on its own terms. Thus, what is needed is much greater commitment from

Muslims to support this project. This is the first *tafsīr* ever attempted directly in English; indeed, it is more than a *tafsīr*; it is an encyclopedia of the Qur'an that will *inshā'allāh* guide many generations of Muslims in the future, but for that dream to be realized, its message must be spread far and wide to different communities. Unless this fundamental challenge is taken head on, we as an Ummah would continue to drift aimlessly.

The seeds of change are planted first and foremost in the mind. When the mind is ready to accept change, the rest follows naturally. Allah (ﷻ) tells us in the noble Qur'an, **"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people unless they are willing to [first] change their attitude" (13:11)**. This is what happened in the early days of Islam. The society in Arabia was described in the Qur'an as *jāhiliyah* — primitive savagery based on ignorance and superstition — in which people fought for petty reasons. The rich and powerful oppressed the poor and weak. Corruption was rampant; so was the oppression of women and girls. Every kind of vice was promoted as a virtue. Is the world any different today? Do not the present-day rich and powerful oppress the poor and weak? The world has in fact moved on to oppress, persecute, and kill on a grand, mechanized scale; more people have been killed in the last 100 years than in the previous 10,000 years. And the people who want it this way use their "high-class" international relations and political science departments at universities to rationalize the idea that the way things are is the way things ought to be. Is that progress and civilization? There are more poor and hungry people in the world today than ever before even while food production has increased phenomenally. The earth is on the verge of extinction because of environmental degradation borne of greed.

What kind of thought process allows for such disparities and exploitation, and should the Muslims be content to sit on the sidelines, even as the situation continues to rapidly deteriorate? It has become clear that the catalyzing ideas leading to phenomenal growth in industrial production have also created a man devoid of all sense of fairness and justice. Greed and extravagance have enshrouded the natural human qualities of compassion and caring.

Our troubled world needs to be brought back to divine guidance so that mercy, magnanimity, and justice become the guiding prescription for humanity. This will not happen with the same stock of secular and secularizing ideas that have brought the world to the brink of disaster leading to endless wars, unfair treatment, and mayhem. Only divine guidance derived from the noble Book can restore man to the original purpose for which he was created: as *khalifah* (vicegerent) of Allah (ﷻ) on earth.

Proper understanding of the divine message in order to apply it in our lives is the essential prerequisite to confront this challenge. This *tafsir*, *The Ascendant Qur'an*, does precisely that. Written for the English-speaking audience, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, it offers an understanding that relates the divine message to our contemporary age. In these very unsettled and uncertain times, unfortunately like many other people, Muslims who are separated from these divine, life-giving words of Allah (ﷻ) are feeling the distress of despair and the associated inertia that comes with not knowing what to do. In order to charge these people up and motivate them to once again shoulder their God-given responsibilities, the humble attempt here to explain the meanings of the Qur'an is meant to show them that today's paralyzing fear and despondency are a by-product of how man exercises power without the benefit of Allah's guidance (ﷻ).

The Qur'an has always been here to energize and discipline our efforts so that we can overturn exactly this situation. However, this cannot happen unless the Qur'an is part of our *real* lives — and this is not the subject of a few pages. Hundreds of thousands of pages have been written, even about the Qur'an, to enable those who have been detached from God to gain individual spiritual fulfillment, but few lines have been authored to say that personal spiritual expansion is just the beginning, that it can never be complete unless the *ghaybi* energy thus harnessed is channeled into a social movement to detach humanity from that which detached it from Allah (ﷻ) to begin with: maximalist governance, its institutions, its executors, and the so-called inevitability of its assertions. This *tafsir* is an attempt to fill that void.

This volume (Volume 4) covers the first 120 of the 200 *āyāt* of *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān*, which was revealed in Madinah. The Muslims had migrated to Madinah from Makkah after spending 13 years in extremely difficult circumstances. Persecution, oppression, exile, and even being tortured to death were their common experience. But migration to Madinah did not leave their problems behind in Makkah; only the nature of them changed. This *sūrah* deals with the early years in Madinah, especially from the Battle of Badr (Ramaḍān, 2AH), in which the Muslims achieved a surprising victory, to the Battle of Uḥud (Shawwāl, 3AH). It is a survey of events occurring during those formative years of the Islamic power base in Madinah. Throughout, the divine *āyāt* of the Qur'an offer the first Muslim generation guidance by helping and supporting it through its uncertain beginnings.

The *āyāt* of this *sūrah* deal with the specific situation facing the Muslims in Madinah, especially during battles — for it is in the immediate life-and-death moments of a battle that the attachment to Allah (ﷻ) is validated, and life lessons are engraved on the heart, never to be forgotten. And in the process of shaping this community that would be required to accept the heavy responsibility of reshaping the world according to Allah's (ﷻ) principles of social justice, the *āyāt* lay down the foundational principles of dealing with the enemies of Allah (ﷻ) — and of humanity — whose mission in life is to divorce ordinary people from the freedom of conscience and the confidence of action that comes from being “one” with Allah (ﷻ).

Regardless of whether the challenge confronting Muslims is with the force of arms or with propaganda and malice, the Qur'an is there to guide them. Led by the noble Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), this majestic Qur'an nurtured the first generation to take on the rebellious *kāfirs*, the treacherous *munāfiqs* within their own ranks, and the ever-troublesome Yahūd that, despite claiming to be recipients of the divine scripture, never failed to betray the Muslims, even after entering into a binding covenant with the Prophet (ﷺ). In this *sūrah*, Allah (ﷻ) shows to His committed servants how to deal with setbacks in battle, as the Battle of Uḥud turned out to be,

despite the Muslims' initial successes. No matter how undesirable and unpleasant, wars are an integral part of life. There will always be enemies of Allah (ﷻ) who in the real world are represented by oppressors and tyrants, fifth columnists, and covenant-betraying coteries. The Qur'an instructs Muslims in how to deal with them — then, now, and in the future.

The Qur'anic message is meant to instruct Muslims by equipping them with divine principles to deal with every situation within the range of human experience. Whether in victory or in defeat — and victory is not automatically guaranteed even to committed Muslims — the Qur'anic imperative offers guidance, comfort, and solace. More is to be learned from the dejection of defeat, in an attempt to figure out why, then from the exultation of victory. The aim is to enhance the collective *taqwá* in a society that would result in Allah (ﷻ) being pleased with it and which ultimately will be pleased with Allah (ﷻ) for the benefit of guidance through an unrelenting wilderness, as well as the reward it will get through divine mercy.

One of the characteristics of the *sūrah*s revealed in Madinah is that while covering a broad range of conceptual issues, they purge the Muslim mind of various misconceptions and misapprehensions acquired in the age of *jāhiliyah*. Without such cleansing, the Muslims would not have been able to manage the undoubted challenges they would face as they prepared for the greater responsibilities in life as Allah's (ﷻ) representatives on earth. This is as true today as it was 1,400 years ago. In the early days of Islam, the first Muslims had to deal with a localized *jāhiliyah*; today it is global. Our responsibility, therefore, is that much greater. We will only be able to discharge it faithfully — and our steps will be more confident — if we have a clearer understanding of the divine Book. And we need this confidence, which can only come from the Book of Allah (ﷻ), in a captive world that immediately brands those that challenge its wayward ways as intellectually backward and socially as terrorist.

Those familiar with Imam al-Āṣī's work and his contribution over the years and especially those who have studied the first three volumes of this monumental *tafsīr* would recognize his unques-

tioned ability to provide a deeper insight into the understanding of the noble Book. Indeed, he has taken our understanding to greater heights linking the divine message more directly to our contemporary troubled times. Those sincere in engaging the majestic Qur'an will discover deeper insights and guidance as they journey through the divine Book secure in the knowledge that the Most Merciful honors those who conscientize Him (2:153). Such a fusion with the divine culture, however, must be accompanied by a proper understanding of the message, and the ultimate motivation to act with purpose and conviction. That is what this *tafsīr* helps us achieve.

One final word about the *tafsīr* project: it was the late Dr. Kalim Siddiqui who proposed and then provided inspiration for this work. We pray to Allah (ﷻ) to bless him and to give him everlasting life in *Jannah al-Firdaws* among the *ṣāliḥūn*, the *ṣiddīqūn*, and the *shuhadā'*. *Āmīn*.

And we pray to Allah (ﷻ) to provide us the ability and the wisdom to understand His message properly in order to enable us to implement it in our lives.

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Sha'bān 23, 1431AH (8-4-2010)

Transliteration Chart

Consonants

أ	none (initial)	ض	ḍ
ؤ	' (medial or final)	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	ة	ḥ
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Vowels and Diphthongs

□	a	ا□	ā	□ى	á
□	u	□آ	ā	□ئى	ay
□	i	□و	ū	□ؤ	aw
		□ى	ī		

The small box in the table above represents an Arabic consonant; for instance, if the box were replaced with the letter *f* (ف), then the table would assume the following configuration,

ف□	fa	فَآ	fā	فَئى	fá
ف□	fu	فَآ	fā	فَئى	fay
ف□	fi	فُؤ	fū	فُؤ	faw
		فِئى	fī		

Tanwīn and Tashdīd

□	an	□ى	ayy	□و	aww
□ى	an	□و	ūw	ف	ff
□	un	□ى	īy (medial)	ش	shsh
□	in	□ى	ī (final)	ر	rr

Similarly, if the box were replaced with the letter *f* (ف), then the table above would look like the following,

فَآ	fan	فَئى	fayy	فَؤ	faww
فِئى	fan	فُؤ	fūw	ف	ff
ف□	fun	فِئى	fīy (medial)	ش	shsh
ف□	fin	فِئى	fī (final)	ر	rr

3

Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, Part 1

The Family of ‘Imrān

This Qur’an is ours when we take it into our hearts and absorb it with our minds. It is not ours when we limit it strictly to audio melody or visual artistry. The meanings of the Qur’an flourish when the people involved in its implementation multiply. Conversely its meanings are curtailed from reality when only a few people are satisfied with examining its *āyāt*.

This Qur’an-in-words will remain an abstraction until we let it engage our emotions and motivate our minds so that it becomes the reference for all human affairs. The healthiest expression of this lively Qur’an is through an *ummaḥ* that interacts with its command and attitudes. The Qur’an comes alive when its *āyāt* circulate from one continent to the next. It is at its optimum working level when humans interact with its instructions in their private lives so as to reorganize their social and collective responsibilities. This is not what characterizes our relationship with this book today; though it seems that the process is in its beginning stages. When we are able to take on the value system, the legal system, and global system that impedes the flow of these Qur’anic meanings, then we will have set into motion a sequence of events that

will cause their own developments, unforeseen entanglements, and anticipated consequences.

What has to be done in our world today is to take this Qur'an beyond its melodies and harmonies. The precious meanings of this Book have to come alive and affect the condition of man on earth. The many Muslims who have failed to come into mental and emotional contact with the Qur'an and transform its words into works have to understand this fact. The Qur'an was meant to directly impact concrete human affairs and persistent social maladies, and to remedy these earth-born problems. Out of this Qur'anic social medicine we had at one time an *ummah*. But today there are fifty-odd nation-states acting as a web of deceit that ensnares all true Muslims. There is not much difference between the social order that was transformed by this Qur'an 1,400 years ago, and the social order today. The words of this divine Writ are as fresh as they have always been. And the task it sets forth awaits those who are capable and willing.

For us to better understand this word-of-God and how it works miracles in societies, we should familiarize ourselves with the effects and influence it had on the first society, which submitted to Allah (ﷻ) by embracing His word. That pioneering society, in Arabia 1,400 years ago, broke new ground in the history of scripture by leading a struggle that was fought on two fronts. They had to fight their military enemies in and around Madinah and then throughout the Arabian Peninsula; they also had to fight the psychological enemies inside their own selves and their families. They would not have been able to conquer these internal and external forces had it not been for the directions, implicit and explicit, in this Qur'an.

It becomes paramount for us to relive in our imaginations, and emulate in our lives, that first successful experience of that primordial generation of Muslims, who were able to show us and all human societies how to move this Qur'an into the ebb and flow of human affairs. Yes, they had their problems. Yes, they were not infallible. Yes, they tried and they erred, and then they tried again and succeeded. And in all this we have to keep our eyes on the impact this

Qur’an had on their priorities, perceptions, and decisions. They were only human, but when they fell they had the Qur’an’s inspiration to stand again; when they deviated they had the Qur’an to steer them back to a straight course; and when they were weak the Qur’an gave them confidence and strength. Sure, in this process they were sometimes harmed and injured, but they were patient and unprotesting. Finally they managed to transform not only their society but also other societies to an Islamic standard of life.

When we realize this, we will know that what was done once can be done again. If humans centuries ago were resourceful enough to fulfil this divine trust, in its full social and universal dimensions, then humans today can be similarly resourceful to do it again. If the Qur’an worked for them, it can work for us. We can begin to feel that the Qur’an is ours as much as it was theirs. Their example is not a static one, limited to a particular place and time in history. It is dynamic in the sense that any group can follow the same prescription — because the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) will never go away — and achieve the same results.

The day must come when Muslims and others are able to see that the universe is Allah’s (ﷻ) physical creation, and the Qur’an His verbal commentary on it: each complements the other, and both are for us to study and understand. Both originate from the same Author. The universe has its physical laws by which it has been functioning from time immemorial, and these physical laws come from Allah (ﷻ). And humans have their social laws by which they have been experiencing the rise and the fall of civilizations from ancient times to the present. These laws also come from the same source. The Qur’an is meant to discipline our attention to these “behavioral” laws that contribute to the rise and fall of civilizations. For this reason the Qur’an is as alive in our age as it was in all previous ages. Circumstances and conditions may have changed, but we in our essence have not changed; it is at this unalterable level of human existence that the Qur’an addresses us.

We have to face the facts: the physical laws by which the universe operates are not outdated, and likewise the social laws by which humans behave are not outdated. Therefore, it is naive of

people to claim that the incomparable Writ is outdated, when all of these regulating laws come from one source: Allah (ﷻ).

Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, the third chapter of the Qur’an, consisting of 200 *āyāt* revealed in Madinah, is a survey of events occurring in Madinah during those formative years of the Islamic power base there. It covers the time after the Battle of Badr (2AH) up to and including the campaign of Uḥud, one year later. Here the Qur’an is interacting with the first Muslim society, helping and supporting it through its highly uncertain beginnings. The Qur’an is so vivid that it gives one the impression he is actually there with the personalities of the time, who were sometimes relaxed and at ease, while at other times unsettled.

The running commentary in the Qur’an highlights the surrounding enemies, who were awaiting any opportunity to attack the Muslims, either with the force of arms or with propaganda and malice. This climaxed with the battle of Uḥud, when the Qur’anic Muslims took on the rebellious *kāfirs*. The battle unfolded with the Muslims scoring an initial victory against their enemies. But the tide of the battle turned, and the Muslims were foiled. As these events were playing out, the Qur’an was explaining all the processes taking place. The Qur’an was being revealed while the Muslims were facing their most intense struggles. Its *āyāt* were shedding light on these turbulent events while simultaneously exposing the lies and fabrications leveled against these determined people from every direction. The Qur’an not only acknowledged an evasive enemy, but it also showed all Muslims, then and now, how to deal with this type of foe. With the help of this Qur’an, the Muslims emerged from their battles with a clear idea of what had been accomplished, where they were, and how to proceed. If we let it, this Book can help us in essentially the same way again and again in our collective lives.

The Qur’an’s instructions are pertinent to all equivalent battles that are characterized by hostile intentions toward Muslims, hostile acts on the battlefield, and hostile recoiling by the *kāfirs* from an indecisive victory, as happened at Uḥud. Once again, the Qur’an is dealing with human constants that bring opposing camps

to the battlefield, one of them Islamic and the other rebellious and nihilistic. So when Muslims are to go to war, hard and undesirable as that may be, they are bound by this precedent, and the rules and regulations in the Qur’an that cover military activities and all other war situations within the range of human experience.

This *sūrah* came down during the initial period after the Hijrah, as the early Muslims settled into their new “homeland,” which now came to be known as Madinah. The hostilities of Badr had just ceased, with the Muslims scoring a resounding victory over Quraysh. Moreover, this victory had elements of the miraculous. Nothing before Badr had indicated that the Muslims could be victorious, as they had been weaker than the enemy in virtually every respect. It was this resounding victory and the mood of confidence it engendered in Madinah that impelled a man like ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Sallūl, who was prominent among the Khazraj, to hide his disdain for the Prophet (ﷺ) and pretend to join the bloc of committed Muslims. This was the first sign of *nifāq* in Madinah. Add to this those before Badr who had faked their Islam in order to be with their family and friends who had become committed Muslims. As some of these committed Muslims became prominent in their own right, some of their relatives rode along on their coattails, pretending to belong to this new Islamic generation. But in fact these make-believe Muslims harbored hatred and bitterness toward Islam and the committed Muslims. Like their equivalents nowadays, they bided their time, and awaited the most opportune moment to make their move. When that moment came with them trying to undermine the *dīn* and its divinely-ordained purposes, their true character surfaced and their intentions became clear.

At this level, these *munāfiqs* (dual-loyalists and turncoats) found common cause with their other indigenous Madinan counterparts, the Yahūd. The common denominator between these hypocrites and betrayers on one side and the Yahūd on the other is their scorn and contempt for Islam, its Prophet (ﷺ), the Qur’an, and the committed Muslims. In this orgy of hatred, the Yahūd outstripped their hypocritical colleagues. Islam brought to light the status of these Yahūd who lived in Madinah among the Arabian

gentiles, that is, the Aws and Khazraj. Islam and the Qur'an deprived the Yahūd of the trump card that they had traditionally used to divide the non-Yahūd of Yathrib,¹ as the two major tribes in the city became part of one strong, united Islamic community.

The victory of Islam at Badr was thus very bad news for the Yahūd, and as a result, Yahūdī hatred of Islam and the Muslims reached unprecedented levels. They now embarked on a campaign to eradicate Islam's might and force. At times they would try to undermine the Muslims by confusing them with suspicions and doubts about the *dīn*, and also about the integrity of prominent Muslims. It was during this Yahūdī backlash against the Muslims that the incident of Banū Qaynuqā' took place and their latent animosity surfaced. None of the agreements they had signed with Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) when he became the leader of Madinah could control their deep-seated hate. At the same time, the Muslims had also to be watchful of the *mushriks* of Makkah, who were reeling from their defeat at Badr. These *mushriks* were now looking for vengeance. They knew their commercial routes, as well as their social status, were threatened by the Islamic State in Madinah. For this reason Quraysh were preparing for another showdown with the Muslims of Madinah.

These different segments of society in Arabia, who all had their own reasons for hating the Muslims, were strong and had considerable resources. By contrast, the new Islamic society in Madinah was still young and growing. Not all was well. On the one hand there were the best of the best: the Muhājirūn and Anṣār who made the Islamic moral and legal order possible in Madinah. But there were also individuals and groups who had not reconciled themselves with these developments. This was a nascent society that had little experience of the responsibilities awaiting them as an *ummaḥ*.

A *munāfiq* such as 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy still enjoyed some status in that society. There were still family ties and tribal affiliations that had to be dealt with. And at this point the Muslims had not reached the point where *dīn* affiliation eclipsed all other associations, of family ties, tribal relations, and class affinities. Obviously,

under these conditions, the Islamic front was vulnerable, as will become clear, later in the *sūrah*, from how the battle of Uḥud went from imminent victory to virtual defeat

True, there was an Islamic government in Madinah at this time, but this did not mean that the Yahūd had automatically lost their upper class status: they still enjoyed a strong position, as well as financial and commercial influence. With all this working for them, these Yahūd thought they could afford to be subtle in their hostility and aversion to Islam and Muhammad (ﷺ). The Muslims at that time had not reorganized their economic and commercial activities on the basis of Islamic principles. This sometimes gave the Yahūd in Madinah the opportunity to destabilize the fraternal bond of the *dīn*. And there were some Muslims who would still listen to what the Yahūd said about Islam or the Prophet (ﷺ). There were even Muslims at this time who sought to protect the Yahūd from some prophetic directives that were meant to safeguard the Muslims from Yahūdī machinations. In one such incident, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy tried to intercede with the Prophet (ﷺ) to spare Banū Qaynuqā' from punishment for their treachery. Ibn Ubayy was even disrespectful to the Prophet (ﷺ) as he tried to make his case for Banū Qaynuqā'.

A remarkable development was the relatively easy victory the Muslims had secured at Badr, when materially and numerically they were outmatched by Quraysh. Two armies met at the battlefront; the result was a thunderous victory for the apparently weaker party. This first victory for the Muslims in their opening military encounter with *mushriks* was nothing less than the Will of Allah (ﷻ) at work through human initiative. Some Muslims may well have thought that victory should be the inevitable reward for being Muslim. They may have thought that, whatever they do, Allah (ﷻ) would intervene in the course of their battles, tip the military scales to their direction, and offer them victory on a silver plate, so to speak.

But Allah's (ﷻ) purpose is not that simple. The law of victory and defeat has to do with psychological preparation, discipline, military procurement, and a methodical approach to Allah (ﷻ),

expressed by practical obedience and utter reliance on Allah (ﷻ) after all possible means are exhausted. This lesson had to be learned the hard way in the course of the battle at Uḥud. This we will relive in the course of this *sūrah*. At the end of the Battle of Uḥud the Muslims felt disappointed and thwarted. This painful lesson dealt agony and injuries, and claimed its share of martyrs, among them the Prophet's (ﷺ) uncle Ḥamzaḥ. More than that, the Muslims suffered distress when they saw the Prophet's (ﷺ) forehead bleeding and his teeth broken; he also fell in a ditch, crumpling his helmet and scratching his cheeks.

Before the *sūrah* goes into the details of the Uḥud engagement, it covers a broad range of conceptual issues. These preliminary *āyāt* are there to purge the Muslim mind of various misconceptions and misapprehensions, so that they would be ready to manage adversity as they prepared for greater responsibilities. In the process, the fact of Allah's (ﷻ) uniqueness and singularity is firmly established. These *āyāt* present a response to the dubieties of the people of earlier scriptures. Their misunderstandings are addressed, and the Qur'an reveals the extent to which some of them were willing to go to mislead the good-natured, patient, tolerant, and accommodating Muslims.

Several Islamic historical narratives indicate that *āyāt* 1–83 of this *sūrah* were revealed to help the Muslims respond to Yemen's Najrān delegation, who were all Christians and had come to Madinah in the ninth year AH. However, it seems unlikely that these *āyāt* were revealed during the ninth *hijrī* year. The content and tone of these *āyāt* suggest that they were revealed during the first few years after the Hijrah, as they obviously address an emerging Islamic society that had to ward off the debilitating effects of Yahūdī conspiracies. These were concerns that were encountered early after the Hijrah, rather than in later years. Although these 83 *āyāt* were probably not revealed specifically for the Christian delegation that came from Najrān, they obviously do address some of the Christian vagueness concerning Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ). They rectify Christian theological alterations and misunderstandings. Beyond that, the Christians of Najrān were invited to the

truth that was originally disclosed in their own scripture, which was now being validated and confirmed by this final Scripture.

Following this part are words of caution and warning to the Jews, along with words of advice to the Muslims, who are told to be watchful of plots being hatched against them. The next section, which is almost half the *sūrah*, concentrates on the conceptual conflict between the adherents of Islam and the adherents of all other erring beliefs and ideas. This is not an irrelevant theoretical argument; it is rather a conflict that is part of the seemingly larger clash of militaries and interests from the many illegitimate power centers who felt threatened by the Islamic advocacy for truth and justice. Aversion to this Islamic truth and reality expressed itself not only in hand-to-hand combat, but also in intellectual challenges. One of the enemies’ priorities was to undermine the truth that characterized this nascent Islamic society. In essence, this war of wits is still being prosecuted between those who adhere to the infallible Qur’an and those who stick to their “scriptural” and non-scriptural prejudices, deviations, and misunderstandings.

Looking at this *sūrah*, it becomes evident that little has changed since then. The present-day opponents of the Qur’an are using more or less the same methods; and they are working toward virtually the same ends. Meanwhile, for Muslims, the Qur’an is still the ultimate reference and source of intellectual ammunition. Anyone who chooses not to refer to the Qur’an in this on-going intellectual confrontation is relinquishing the only reliable and effective weapon available. No Muslim can afford to remain aloof from this authentic Scripture and its timely *āyāt*, which will eventually lead to the triumph of truth and justice over distortion and tyranny. We Muslims have abandoned this vital component of the *dīn*, with the result that we have no influence on the direction the world is heading in; therefore it is high time we return to it.

In the first part of *Sūrah* Āl ‘Imrān, Christians and Jews are addressed specifically, because they had deviated from their scripture and now refused to accept the legitimacy of the Islamic community in Madinah, representing the continuity of that scripture. This is elucidated in such *āyāt* as,

Are you not aware of those who have been granted their share of revelation [aforetime]? They have been called upon to let Allah's writ be their law — and yet some of them turn away [from it] in their obstinacy... (3:23).

O people of earlier revelation! Why do you argue about Abraham, seeing that the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till [long] after him? Have you no sense? (3:65).

Some of the followers of earlier revelations would love to lead you astray. O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you deny the truth of Allah's involvement [in human affairs] to which you yourselves bear witness? O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you cloak the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth of which you are [so well] aware? And some of the followers of earlier revelation say [to one another], "Declare your belief in what has been revealed to those who believe [in Muhammad] at the beginning of the day, and deny the truth of what came later, so that they might go back [on their faith]; but do not [really] believe anyone who does not follow your own faith." (3:69–73).

And among the followers of earlier revelation there is many a one who, if you entrust him with a treasure, will [faithfully] restore it to you; and there is among them many a one who, if you entrust him with a single *dīnār* [a gold coin], will not restore it to you unless you keep pressuring him [to repay] — which is an outcome of their assertion, "No blame can attach to us [for anything we may do] with regard to these unlettered folk." And [so] they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware [that it is a lie] (3:75).

And, behold, there are indeed some among them who distort the Bible with their tongues, so as to make you think

that [what they say] is from the Bible, the while it is not from the Bible; and who say, “This is from Allah,” the while it is not from Allah. And thus do they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware [that it is a lie] (3:78).

Say, “O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you refuse to acknowledge the truth of Allah’s manifestation [in human affairs], when Allah is witness to all that you do?” Say, “O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you [endeavor to] bar those who have come to believe [in this divine Writ] from the path of Allah by trying to make it appear crooked, when you yourselves bear witness [to its being straight]? (3:98–99).

Lo! It is you [the Muslims] who [are prepared to] love them, but they will not love you, although you believe in all of the revelation. And when they meet you, they assert, “We believe [as you believe];” but when they find themselves alone, they gnaw their fingers in rage against you. If good fortune comes to you, it upsets them; and if evil befalls you, they rejoice in it (3:119–120).

All this makes it clear that the enemies of the Muslims did not express their hostility only at the war front, or in political alliances and maneuvers; they also waged a war of words against the intellectual basis and legitimacy of Islam. Their main strategy was to spread doubts and confusion by raising questions designed to create uncertainty in the minds of the Muslims. It is the Islamic intellect and worldview, and the associated faith and passion, that sustain an Islamic world order; so these supposed scripturalists had to attack this fundamental Islamic feature. They knew it then and they know it now: the only way to subvert Islam as a *dīn* is to chip away at the mind-set and spirit that sustain the conviction and confidence of Muslims. No power on earth can challenge Muslims when they are at peace in their minds and balanced in their emotions, but they are vulnerable when their spirits are weakened.

The most dangerous enemies the Muslims have are those who seek to undermine their faith and commitment to Islam before attacking their bodies, societies, and resources. This enemy is busy using every type of weapon, from theological arguments to technological bombardments; he never gives up.

The current wars against the Muslims — and there are more wars in the world today against Muslims than against any other people — have been preceded by a systematic assault on Islam as a *dīn*, an ideology, and a suitable program, for the prosperity of the human race. Before colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism robbed the Muslims of their material resources, they drove a wedge into their relationship with Allah (ﷻ), their understanding of His Scripture, and their kinship with each other. They know from experience that as long as Muslims maintain their connection with divine revelation, and are disciplined by it, they will never be vulnerable to the subversion of their faith and societies by their enemies. It is for this reason that massive budgets are allocated for intellectual and cultural attacks on Islam, and educational programs are devised to distort Muslim understandings of Islam to such an extent that Muslims can no longer recognize their enemies even when their societies and institutions are under the most direct adversarial attack.

Once the light of scripture is extinguished in Muslim hearts, it is so much easier to invade their lands — politically or militarily — steal their petroleum and other resources, and have them pay for their own subjugation by depositing their wealth in institutions controlled by and working for their enemies! This is a fact and a reality that we are now facing as a result of forsaking this Book of books, and this is why every tool in the West's arsenal is now being focused on detaching the Muslims from their divine Scripture. This is precisely what we are warned of in this *sūrah*, **“A group of ‘scriptural’ people would love to mislead you...”** Allah (ﷻ) has spoken the truth, experience has demonstrated that truth, history has verified that truth; and yet so many Muslims today are oblivious of this truth.

That is why, in this *sūrah*, this Qur'an seeks to preempt and counter precisely this sort of attack. That first generation of

Muslims was protected by their understanding of these *āyāt* and the leadership of the Prophet (ﷺ). The irony that these *āyāt* highlight is that all these ambiguities, uncertainties, obscurities, and ambivalence were generated by people who should have known better: the Jews in Madinah and the Christians of self-interest and imperialist tendencies. That first generation of committed Muslims was groomed for its universal task, and could not afford to be distracted by materialistic and self-interested Jewish and Christian groups. Muslims needed information, facts, direction, and advice; they got it all from these healing and inspiring words.

Muslims, now as then, should understand that they have enemies who are willing to cast aside the Scripture of Allah (ﷻ) if that is what suits their national and racial interests. These “people of scripture” (Ahl al-Kitāb) used their religion as a cloak, while their real concerns were poisonous and dangerous, as Allah (ﷻ) Himself states. Part of the reason for this enmity expressed by Jewish and Christian populations is that an Arab received this final Scripture, rather than one of them. That the Muslims were as open-hearted and sharing of this Scripture, as should be expected from bearers of revelation, only made worse the resentment of the Jews and Christians.

Allah (ﷻ) shows the Muslims that His enemies, who are also their enemies, are weak and open to being defeated, however strong they may seem. That is because they have set themselves up for failure by denying Allah’s (ﷻ) power and presence in human affairs, by their deviation away from Allah’s (ﷻ) Scripture, and by their treacherous histories, during which they even killed Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ). We Muslims can be assured that when we fulfil the divine commands, we shall indeed deal a heavy blow to the enemies of Allah (ﷻ), as the early Muslims succeeded in doing at the Battle of Badr.

The uplifting and inspiring qualities of the Qur’an are encapsulated in such *āyāt* as,

**Allah — there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living,
the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being! Step by step**

has He bestowed upon you from on high this divine Writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever still remains [of earlier revelations]: for it is He who bestowed from on high the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, as a guidance to mankind, and it is He who has bestowed [upon man] the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Behold, as for those who are bent on denying Allah's messages, grievous suffering awaits them; for Allah is Almighty, and the Avenger of evil. Verily, nothing on earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah... (3:1-5).

Behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah's power presence], neither their worldly possessions nor their offspring will in the least avail them against Allah; and it is they, they who shall be the fuel of the Fire! [To them shall happen] the like of what happened to Pharaoh's people and those who lived before them: they gave the lie to Our messages, and so Allah took them to task for their sins; for Allah is severe in retribution. Say to those who are bent on denying the truth, "You shall be overcome [and] gathered to Hell — and how evil a resting-place!" You have already had a demonstration [of Allah's involvement in man's affairs] in the two hosts that met in battle, one host fighting in Allah's cause and the other denying Him; with their own eyes [the former] saw the others as twice their own number; but Allah strengthens with His support whom He wills. In this, behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see (3:10-13).

Behold, the only [true] *dīn* in the sight of Allah is [man's] self-surrender to Him; and those who were vouchsafed revelation aforetime took, out of mutual jealousy, to divergent views [on this point] only after knowledge [thereof] had come to them. But as for him

who denies the truth of Allah’s involvement [in man’s affairs], behold, Allah is swift in reckoning (3:19).

Say, “O Allah, Lord of all dominion! You grant dominion to whom You will, and you take away dominion from whom You will; and You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will. In Your hand is all good. Verily, You have the power to will anything (3:26).

Let not the [committed] Muslims take those who deny the truth for their allies in preference to [committed] Muslims — since he who does this cuts himself off from Allah in everything — unless it be to protect yourselves against them in this way. But Allah warns you to beware of Him, for with Allah is all journeys’ end (3:28).

Behold, the people who have the best claim to Abraham are surely those who follow him — as does this Prophet and all who believe [in him] — and Allah is near to the covenant-bearers (3:68).

Do they seek, perchance, a *dīn* other than in Allah, although it is to Him that whatever is in the heavens and on earth surrenders itself, willingly or unwillingly, since to Him all must return? (3:83).

For, if one goes in search of a *dīn* other than self-surrender to Allah, it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost (3:85).

O you who are secure in your commitment [to Allah]! If you pay heed to some of those to whom revelation was vouchsafed aforetime, they might cause you to renounce the truth after you have come to believe [in it]. And how could you deny the truth when it is unto

you that Allah's manifestations are being conveyed, and it is in your midst that His Apostle lives? But he who holds fast to Allah has already been guided to a straight way.

O you who are committed to Allah! Be conscious of Allah with all the consciousness that is due to Him, and do not allow death to overtake you before you have surrendered yourselves to Him. And hold fast, all together, to the bond with Allah, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren; and [how, when] you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it. In this way Allah makes clear His manifestation to you, so that you might find guidance... (3:100–103).

You are indeed the best Ummah that has ever interacted with people for [the good of] mankind: you enforce the [common] good and you forbid what is wrong, and you are committed to Allah. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith, it would have been for their own good; [but only] few among them are committed, while most of them are iniquitous. [But] these can never inflict more than a passing hurt on you; and if they fight against you, they will turn their backs on you [in flight], and will not be sustained. Overshadowed by ignominy are they wherever they may be, save [when they bind themselves again] in a bond with Allah and a bond with men; for they have earned the burden of Allah's condemnation, and are overshadowed by humiliation. All this [has befallen them] because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah's manifestation [in human affairs] and in their slaying of the prophets against all right; all this [has befallen them] because they rebelled [against

Allah], and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right (3:110–112).

O you who are committed to Allah! Do not take as allies people who are not of your kind. They spare no effort to corrupt you; they would love to see you in distress. Vehement hatred has already come into the open from out of their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is yet worse. We have indeed made the manifestations [of Allah’s will] clear to you, if you would but use your reason. Lo! It is you who [are prepared to] love them, but they will not love you, although you believe in all of the revelation. And when they meet you, they assert, “We are as committed [as you];” but when they find themselves alone, they gnaw their fingers in rage against you. Say, “Perish in your rage! Behold, Allah has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men]!” If good fortune comes to you, it upsets them; and if evil befalls you, they rejoice in it. But if you are patient in adversity and on guard [concerning Allah], their guile cannot harm you at all; for, verily, Allah encompasses [with His might] all that they do (3:118–120).

From the extended excerpts above, and the multiple themes they discuss, it is clear that,

1. scripture-bearers (the Yahūd) in Madinah and elsewhere were conducting an extensive defamation campaign against the new Muslim community. Their efforts amounted to a string of conspiracies. They were utterly determined to undermine the confidence linking the committed Muslims to Allah (ﷻ) and to His Prophet (ﷺ).
2. the impact upon the budding Islamic community was significant; had it not been so, these long and emphatic *āyāt* would not have been revealed by Allah (ﷻ) in the way they were.
3. the warnings in these *āyāt* are not only for the Muslims of that time, but for Muslims of all times. Today Jewish and Christian

groups are trying their best to counter the power and influence of Islam in virtually every corner of the world. The concentration of *āyāt* was necessary to defuse any softening of Muslims toward these fierce enemies of Islam.

The second segment of the *sūrah* deals primarily with the conflict at Uḥud. Some facts pertaining to Islam as a practical concept in times of war are documented. The events, developments, emotions, and sentiments that were circulating within the Muslim rank and file are dealt with in a constructive and positive way. The first and second parts of the *sūrah* help to clarify the way Islam has to be understood in practice, even if that practice happens to be the slow exhaustion of enemy forces during a war. Muslims are expected to learn from both their understanding of Allah's (ﷻ) words and their experience in Allah's (ﷻ) world. The issue of defeat and victory is discussed in this context.

We shall also see in the course of this *sūrah* what *dīn* means and what *Islam* means. We will discover that *dīn* does not mean *religion* and that Islam did not begin with Muhammad (ﷺ). We will also get a better grip on the relationship this first generation of Muslims had with Allah (ﷻ). And we shall also notice how Muslims are barred from associating with, giving allegiance to, allying with, and authorizing any relationship with a power bloc that is not committed to Allah (ﷻ). All of these themes will appear ever more vividly as we go through the lessons in this *sūrah*.

The final point to note before going into a detailed discussion of the *āyāt* of *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān* is that there are considerable parallels with *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, the second *sūrah* of the venerated Qur'an. In both these *sūrahs* there is a consideration of the position of various groupings of peoples' vis-à-vis this Book. At the beginning of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* people were classified as *committed* or *deniers*. In *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān* some people are classified as *mental obstructionists*, those who pick on marginal logical issues — issues that are mentioned in the Qur'an but need more human development, advancement, and experience to understand. They do this seeking not a mind-satisfying answer but rather controversy, mental altercation, and division.

These types are contrasted with people who are well-grounded and well-founded in knowledge, and who are able to understand rationally that all this Qur’anic information comes from Allah (ﷻ), whether the *āyāt* can be fully comprehended by man or whether the *āyāt* are open to speculative interpretation. People with sound judgement and concrete knowledge say, in effect, that all of this Qur’an is from Allah (ﷻ), including both the *āyāt* they thoroughly understand, and the *āyāt* they — as evolving humans — are in the process of understanding.

There is another parallel between *al-Baqarah* and *Āl ‘Imrān*: the analogy between the way Adam (ﷺ), our common father, was created and the way Jesus (ﷺ) was created. Both have something in common: an unusual form of creation. A third parallel is the debate with the peoples of prior scriptures (Jews and Christians). In *al-Baqarah* there was a concentrated discussion of Jewish history and an expose of their deficiencies, faults, and treachery. In *Āl ‘Imrān* there are emphatic words of advice for and information about the Christians.

Both these *sūrah*s wind down with a *du‘ā’*. The first *du‘ā’* has a historical depth to it as well as a plea to Allah (ﷻ) not to burden Muslims with a load beyond their capacity; Muslims implore Allah (ﷻ) for care, attention, and aid in discharging their responsibilities. In the second *sūrah*, the *du‘ā’* asks Allah (ﷻ) to stabilize Islamic positions, to accept the Muslims’ call to faith and duty, and to grant recompense in the life to come.

Lastly the two *sūrah*s complement one another on the issue of success. In *al-Baqarah* success is mentioned in its opening *āyāt* as being the share of those whose commitment to Allah (ﷻ) takes them through worldly obligations that, at the end, bring about success, **“It is they who are working with guidance from Allah, and it is they who are successful” (2:5)**. In *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* the last *āyah* speaks about success coming to those who are constantly and consciously aware of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence, **“And be on guard concerning Allah so that you may be successful” (3:200)**.

This *sūrah* is named for ‘Imrān, the father of Maryam (ﷺ).² Maryam (ﷺ) is pledged by her mother to the service of Allah (ﷻ).

Allah (ﷻ) provides her with sustenance in her niche. The Qur'an cites her as the most refined woman of her time. Furthermore, she is given the glad tidings of 'Īsá (ﷺ).

In scholarly circles *al-Baqarah* and *Āl 'Imrān* are known as *al-zahrawayn* (the two luminous ones) because they shine with knowledge and guidance, or because those who read and understand them, and reflect their teachings in their lives, will shine with light on the Day of Judgement.³ The merits of *al-Baqarah* and *Āl 'Imrān* are stated in the following hadith,

*Read the Qur'an as it will become an intercessor for its companions on Resurrection Day. The zahrawayn will appear as two mists with birds hovering above. These sūrah's will become the proponents of their reciters. Read al-Baqarah because assimilating it is prosperity and abandoning it is a liability..."*⁴

The Incompatibility of *Īmān* and *Kufr*

- In the name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.
- (3:1) Alif-Lām-Mīm.
- (3:2) Allah — there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being!
- (3:3) Step by step has He bestowed upon you from on high this divine Writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations]: for it is He who has bestowed from on high the Torah and the Gospel,
- (3:4) Aforetime, as a guidance to mankind, and it is He who has bestowed [upon man] the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Behold, as for those who are bent on denying Allah's manifestations [in man's affairs], grievous suffering awaits them, for Allah is Almighty, an Avenger of evil.
- (3:5) Verily, nothing on earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الْم ۝ (١) اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۝ (٢) نَزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ

مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ ۝ (٣) مِنْ قَبْلُ هَدَى لِلنَّاسِ

وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ

ذُو أَنْقَامٍ ۝ (٤) إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَى عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

۝ (٥) هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝ (٦) هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ

هِنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخْرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا

تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا

أُولَئِكَ الْأَلْبَابِ ۝ (٧) رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ

رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ۝ (٨) رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ

فِيهِ إِلَّا أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْوَعْدَ ۝ (٩) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَن تُغْنِي

عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ وَقُودُ النَّارِ

كُذِّبُوا ۝ (١٠) كَذَّبَ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَآخَذَهُمْ

اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿١١﴾ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَتُغْلَبُونَ
 وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٢﴾ قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ
 فِي فِتْنَةِ الْقُرْآنِ فَتَنَّا فِتْنَةً تَقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأُخْرَىٰ كَافِرَةٌ
 يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِّثْلَيْهِمْ رَأَىٰ الْعَيْنُ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصَرِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ إِنَّ
 فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿١٣﴾ زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ
 مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ
 وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثُ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ
 الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَتَابِ ﴿١٤﴾ قُلْ أُوذِيكُمْ
 بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذَلِكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّتْ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
 الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَأَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ
 وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿١٥﴾ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَمْنَا
 فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦﴾ الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ
 وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ ﴿١٧﴾ شَهِدَ
 اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ
 إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْأَسْلَمُ وَمَا

اٰخْتَلَفَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَوْا اَلْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ
 بَعِيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيٰتِ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ
 ﴿١٩﴾ فَاِنْ حَاجُّوكَ فَقُلْ اَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلّٰهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ ۗ وَقُلْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَوْا
 اَلْكِتٰبَ وَالْاٰمِيْنَ ؕ اَسْلَمْتُمْ ۗ فَاِنْ اَسْلَمُوْا فَقَدْ اَهْتَدَوْا ۗ وَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا
 فَاِنَّمَآ عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بِصِيْرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٢٠﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ
 بِآيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّبِيَّيْنَ بَعِيْرَ حَقٍّ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ
 يَآمُرُوْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُم بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٢١﴾
 اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ حَبِطَتْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ
 مِنْ نَّصِيْرِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ
 يُدْعَوْنَ اِلَى كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْا فَرِيْقًا مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ
 ﴿٢٣﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا لَنْ تَمْسَسَنَا النَّارُ اِلَّا اَيَّامًا مَّعْدُوْدٰتٍ ۗ وَغَرَّهُمْ فِي
 دِيْنِهِمْ مَا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَكَيْفَ اِذَا جَمَعْنَاهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ
 فِيْهِ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾
 قُلِ اللّٰهُمَّ مَلِكِ الْمَلِكِ تُوْتِي الْمَلِكِ مَن تَشَآءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمَلِكِ مِمَّنْ
 تَشَآءُ وَتُعْزِزُ مَن تَشَآءُ وَتُذَلُّ مَن تَشَآءُ ۗ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ۗ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ
 مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ
 ﴿٣٧﴾ لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ
 يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاتِلُوا
 وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٣٨﴾ قُلْ إِنْ تَخْشَوْنَ مَا فِي
 صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْشِرُونَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَعِلْمِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
 وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ
 خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمِمَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا
 وَيُحَذِّرْكُمْ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٤٠﴾ قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ
 اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾
 قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ۗ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

- (3:6) He it is who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. There is no deity save Him, the Almighty, the Truly Wise.
- (3:7) He it is who has bestowed upon you from on high this divine Writ, containing manifestations that are clear in and by themselves — and these are the essence of the divine Writ — as well as others that are allegorical. Those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth go after that part of the divine Writ which has been expressed in allegory, seek-

ing out [what is bound to create] confusion, and seeking [to arrive at] its final meaning [in an arbitrary manner]; but none save Allah knows its final meaning. So those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say, “We are committed to it; the whole [of the divine Writ] is from our Sustainer — albeit none takes this to heart save those who are endowed with insight.

- (3:8) “O our Sustainer! Let not our hearts swerve from the truth after You have guided us; and bestow upon us the gift of Your grace; verily, You are the [true] Giver of Gifts.
- (3:9) “O our Sustainer! Verily, You will gather mankind together to witness the Day about [the coming of] which there is no doubt; verily, Allah never fails to fulfil His promise.”
- (3:10) Behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth, neither their worldly possessions nor their offspring will in the least avail them against Allah; and it is they, they who shall be the fuel of the Fire!
- (3:11) [To them shall happen] the like of what happened to Pharaoh’s people and those who lived before them: they gave the lie to Our manifestations, and so Allah took them to task for their sins, for Allah is severe in retribution.
- (3:12) Say to those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah’s power presence], “You shall be overcome and gathered into Hell — how evil a resting-place!”
- (3:13) You have already had a manifestation [of Allah’s power presence] in the two hosts that met in battle, one host fighting in Allah’s cause and the other denying Him; with their own eyes [the former] saw the others as twice their own number, but Allah strengthens with His succor whom He wills. In this, behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see.
- (3:14) Alluring unto man is the enjoyment of worldly desires through women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and horses of high mark, and cattle, and lands. All this may be enjoyed in the life of this world — but the most beautiful of all goals is with Allah.

- (3:15) Say, “Shall I tell you of better things than those [earthly joys]? For those who are on guard [concerning Allah] there are, with their Sustainer, gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide, and spouses pure, and Allah’s goodly acceptance.” And Allah sees all that is in [the hearts of] His servants —
- (3:16) Those who say, “O our Sustainer! Behold, we are committed [to you]; forgive us, then, our sins, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire,”
- (3:17) Those who are patient in adversity, and true to their word, and truly devout, and who spend [in Allah’s way], and pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts.
- (3:18) Allah [Himself] proffers evidence — and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge — that there is no deity save Him, the Upholder of Equity. There is no deity save Him, the Almighty, the Truly Wise.
- (3:19) Behold, the only [true] *dīn* [religion, law, ethical code, or way of life] in the sight of Allah is self-surrender unto Him; and those who were vouchsafed revelation aforetime took, out of mutual jealousy, to divergent views [on this point] only after knowledge [thereof] had come to them. But as for him who denies the truth of Allah’s manifestation, behold, Allah is swift in reckoning!
- (3:20) Thus, [O Prophet], if they argue with you, say, “I have surrendered my whole being to Allah, and [so have] all who follow me!” And ask those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime, as well as all unlettered people, “Have you [too] surrendered yourselves unto Him?” And if they surrender themselves unto Him, they are on the right path; but if they turn away, behold, your duty is no more than to deliver the message: for Allah sees all that is in [the hearts of] His creatures.
- (3:21) Verily, as for those who deny the truth of Allah’s manifestations, and slay the Prophets against all right, and slay people who reinforce equity, announce unto them a grievous chastisement.

- (3:22) It is they whose works shall come to naught both in this world and in the life to come; and they shall have none to succor them.
- (3:23) Are you not aware of those who have been granted their share of revelation [aforetime]? They have been called upon to let Allah's Writ be their law, and yet some of them turn away [from it] in their obstinacy,
- (3:24) Simply because they claim, "The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days;" and thus the false beliefs which they invented have [in time] caused them to betray their faith.
- (3:25) How, then, [will they fare] when We shall gather them all together to witness the Day about [the coming of] which there is no doubt, when every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has done, and none shall be wronged?
- (3:26) Say, "O Allah, Lord of all dominion! You grant dominion to whom You will, and you take away dominion from whom You will; and You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will. In Your hand is all good. Verily, You have the power to will anything.
- (3:27) "You make the night grow longer by shortening the day, and You make the day grow longer by shortening the night. And You bring forth the living out of that which is dead, and You bring forth the dead out of that which is alive. And You grant sustenance to whom You will, beyond all reckoning."
- (3:28) Let not the committed Muslims take those who deny the truth as their allies in preference to the committed Muslims — since he who does this cuts himself off from Allah in everything — unless it be to protect your lives against them in this way. But Allah warns you to beware of Him, for with Allah is all journeys' end.
- (3:29) Say, "Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or bring it into the open, Allah knows it: for He knows all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth; and Allah has power to will anything."

- (3:30) On the Day when every human being will find himself faced with all the good he has done, and with all the evil he has done, [many a one] will wish that there were a long span of time between himself and that [Day]. Hence, Allah warns you to beware of Him; but Allah is most compassionate toward His creatures.
- (3:31) Say [O Prophet], “If you love Allah, follow me, [and] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins; for Allah is Much-Forgiving, a dispenser of grace.”
- (3:32) Say, “Pay heed unto Allah and the Apostle.” But if you turn away, then Allah does not favor those who deny Him (Āl ‘Imrān:1–32).

In the *tafsīr* literature there is an opinion that the first section of this *sūrah*, consisting of the *āyāt* quoted above and the following 50 *āyāt*, were revealed when a Christian delegation arrived in Madinah from Yemen (Najrān), and there followed a discussion between them and Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) about Jesus (ﷺ) and who he really was.⁵ The problem with this opinion is that the Christian Yemeni delegation came during the ninth year of the Hijrah, the year that is known as the “Year of Delegations.” The established fact after nine years of the Hijrah was the empowerment of the Muslims, the rise of an Islamic voice throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and the increasing popularity of Islam. All these power issues forced or persuaded other power factions to come to Madinah and meet with Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) either to curry favor with him, or to reach an accommodation with him, or at least to try to decide what they could do about this up-and-coming Islamic power base.

This writer’s understanding of these *āyāt* suggests that they were revealed earlier than the ninth year AH. It seems that in this debate with Christians and Jews, Christians here in particular, the Qur’anic rebuttal of their theological errors, the Qur’anic response to their doubts about the Prophet (ﷺ), and the effects on society at large, were not tied to the visit of the Christians from Najrān. There must have been, within the dynamics of a growing, expanding, and flourishing Islam, other episodes that prompted the reve-

lation of these *āyāt* addressing the nature of Christian theological opposition to Islam’s unambiguous concept of *tawhīd* — Allah (ﷻ) being One as Creator and as Lawmaker. With this being said, it should be noted there are a minority of accounts that place the Najrānī Christians’ visit much earlier in the *Sīrah*. Ibn Kathīr states that the Najrān delegation came to Madinah before the Ḥudaybiyah Armistice, which took place around 6AH.⁶ Muḥammad ‘Izzah Darwazah, in his book *Sīrah al-Rasūl*, says that the Christian delegation of Najrān came to Madinah during the “first quarter of the Hijrah,” meaning between two and three years after the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived in Madinah.⁷ If these accounts are correct, there is no contradiction between the traditional account regarding the revelation of these *āyāt* and the above understanding of them.

Generally speaking this *sūrah* is a testament to the type of fierce ideological anti-Islamic opposition that arose among the *kāfirs*, the *mushriks*, the Yahūd, and the Christians. This opposition intensified as the Muslims became established as a power, a government, and a military force to be reckoned with, and has never relented, although the circumstances and the forms it has taken have constantly changed.

It is not surprising to find religious leaders being drawn into this power polarization between the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) and those who are with him on one side, and those who are making war against him on the other side. Most Christian clergy have long been influenced more by governments and earthly power than by the Creator; they have been swayed by the powers-that-be rather than by the Power that is. There have, of course, been some Christians who have taken more honorable positions, but established churches and the great majority of the clergy have taken their cues from the agnostic political temple. These *āyāt* are a direct rejoinder to these types.

The distinction between followers of a well-documented and well-established scripture such as this Qur’an and the followers of partial scripture or confused scripture comes out very clearly as the *sūrah* progresses. Some people may think that the Christians and Jews are peoples of a divine book, but their behavior and acts are

those of *kāfirs*. The people of *īmān* are defined and distinct, as they should be; and the people of *kufr* are defined and distinct. There is no blurring the line on this issue.

The Qur'an is unequivocal about the incompatibility of *īmān* and *kufr*,

Allah — there is no divinity except Him, the Ever-Lasting, the Ever-In-Command of all being. In small stages He endowed you, from on high, with this divine Writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever there still remains [of earlier scriptures], for it is He who has bestowed from on high the Torah and the Gospel in times past, as a guidance to humanity, and it is He who has bestowed [upon man] the standard by which to distinguish the true from the false. Behold, as for those who are bent on denying Allah's manifestation [in human affairs], great suffering awaits them; for Allah is Almighty, an Avenger of evil.

He it is who has conferred upon you from on high this divine Writ, containing manifestations that are clear in and by themselves — and these are the substance of the divine Writ — as well as others that are metaphorical. Now those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth go after that part of the divine Writ which has been expressed symbolically, seeking out [what is bound to create] disarray, and seeking [to arrive at] its final meaning [in a haphazard manner]; but none except Allah knows its final meaning. Hence, those who are profoundly rooted in knowledge say, "We are committed to it; the whole [of the divine Writ] is from our Sustainer," albeit none takes this to heart except those who are gifted with perceptivity (3:2–7).

This cluster of *āyāt* has the definite purpose of exposing the Yahūd. They are the ones who are dressed down here and by other more specific *āyāt* such as,

Indeed, as for those who deny the truth of Allah’s manifestations, and slay the Prophets against all right, and slay people who press for equity, herald unto them a distressful castigation (3:21).

When Allah (ﷻ) advises the Muslims not to take the *kāfirs* for allies, these potential allies in the context of those times and our times are the Yahūd: committed Muslims should not ally themselves with them to the exclusion of other committed Muslims. The *āyah*, though, is general, covering also other *kāfirs* and *mushriks*, who may be included on a par with the Yahūd.

As with many *āyāt* in the Qur’an, the ones in the beginning of Āl ‘Imrān shed light on the unfolding events during the time of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) struggle. But from there on they are also meant to engender an attitude for dealing with similar events as they occur in the lives of subsequent generations who are struggling in the manner and for the purposes of the Prophet (ﷺ). So when Allah (ﷻ) says,

Say to those who are bent on denying the truth, “You shall be subdued and gathered in Hell — and how evil a resting-place.” You have already had a manifestation [of Allah’s power presence on earth] in the two legions that met in battle, one legion fighting in Allah’s campaign and the other denying Him; with their own eyes [the former] saw the others as twice their own number, but Allah fortifies with His relief whom He wills (3:12–13).

He is not referring only to the Battle of Badr, but also to similar confrontations throughout human history.

This *āyah* is specifically addressed to the Yahūd. To this end Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have related,

After the Prophet (ﷺ) thwarted Quraysh at Badr he called for a meeting with the Yahūd in Madinah. And he said to them,

*“Surrender to Allah before you end up suffering the consequences which Quraysh have suffered [at Badr].” They replied, “O Muhammad! Don’t get carried away and think, just because you killed off some Qurayshīs who are militarily inexperienced and gullible, that it may happen again. If you were to duel with us you would come to realize that we are the ones to be reckoned with. We are matchless.” It was in response to this Yahūdī attitude that Allah (ﷻ) said, **“Say to those who deny Allah’s power presence you will be defeated and gathered in Hell...”**⁸*

Allah (ﷻ) instructs His Prophet (ﷺ) by showing him, and by extension all Muslims, how to get to the heart of the matter,

And if they [Christians and Jews] argue with you, say, “I have submitted myself to Allah, along with those who are with me” and say to the People of the Book and the scripturally illiterate, “Have you relinquished yourselves [to Allah]?” If they do relinquish and surrender themselves [to Allah] then they are guided; but if they recede [from this duty] then all that is expected of you [O Muhammad] is to convey [this fact to them]. And Allah is ever watchful of His subordinates (3:20).

This *āyah* had obvious relevance and in the context of the struggle of Allah’s final Prophet (ﷺ). But it is also relevant any time polarization occurs between those who represent *īmān* and those who represent *kufr*. There are no time or place barriers to the eternal application of this *āyah*.

It is pertinent to consider the relationship at that time between the Jews and the Christians, with all the differences that divided them, and the nature of their liaison when this Qur’an came to set straight the historical and revelatory record. There is no solid historical information on this point. However, what is obvious is the fact that the Qur’anic *āyāt* address them all as Ahl al-Kitāb, strongly implying their unified position vis-à-vis the Prophet

(ﷻ), the Qur’an, and Islam. In a sense that relationship reminds us of the contemporary circular argument about Tel Aviv and Washington: who between Israel and the US is the dog, and who the wagging tail?

Allah (ﷻ) is the Source of All Scripture

Alif-Lām-Mīm.

Allah — there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being! Gradually He bestowed upon you from on high this divine Writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever there still remains [of earlier revelations], for it is He who has bestowed from on high the Torah and the Gospel;

Aforetime, as a guidance to mankind, and it is He who has bestowed [upon man] the standard by which to discern the true from the false. Behold, as for those who are bent on denying Allah’s manifestation [in man’s affairs], grievous suffering awaits them; for Allah is Almighty, an Avenger of evil.

Verily, nothing on earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah. He it is who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. There is no deity save Him, the Almighty, the Truly Wise. He it is who has bestowed upon you from on high this divine Writ, containing manifestations that are clear in and by themselves — and these are the essence of the divine Writ — as well as others that are symbolic. Now those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth go after that part of the divine Writ which has been expressed in symbolic representation, seeking out [what is bound to create] confusion, and seeking [to arrive at] its final meaning [in an arbitrary manner]; but none save Allah knows its final meaning. Hence, those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say, “We are committed to it; the whole [of the divine Writ]

is from our Sustainer;” albeit none takes this to heart save those who are endowed with insight.

“O our Sustainer! Let not our hearts swerve from the truth after You have guided us; and bestow upon us the gift of Your grace: verily, You are the [true] Giver of Gifts. O our Sustainer! Verily, You will gather mankind together to witness the Day about [the coming of] which there is no doubt: verily, Allah never fails to fulfil His promise (3:1–9).

Like *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* opens with the three letters from the Arabic alphabet that correspond to A, L, and M in the English or Latin alphabet. They are placed at the beginning of the *sūrah*, as others have been placed at the beginning of other *sūrahs*, perhaps to draw our attention to the fact that this Qur’an is made up of letters from the alphabet, which are available to every human being. Despite this, no human has ever been able to put together words and ideas that can even remotely match this miraculous Book.

The first section of this *sūrah* gets the reader to develop a grip on the people of previous scriptures, who almost instinctively came out in opposition to the Prophet (ﷺ). One might expect these types, who were familiar with God, prophets, and scripture, to be the first to recognize and acknowledge the merit and virtue of this Qur’an; but instead they waged a relentless campaign of baseless opposition to this last and final Scripture. Had they used their God-given gifts of reason and logical thought, they would not have become opponents and adversaries of Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and His last Book.

“Allah — there is no deity besides Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being!” This single *āyah* distinguishes Muslims from the deviant ideas and errant beliefs that other peoples have given credence to. Atheism, agnosticism, godlessness, the fabrications and speculations of Jews and Christians, and any other creeds, religions, and ideologies that do not cohere with this fundamental truth are flatly contradicted and corrected. **“...the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being:”** Allah (ﷻ)

has no equal, no match, and no peer, as He is the only Divine Being. He is Ever-Existing. His “life” is absolute and self-sustained. No one and nothing corresponds to or tallies with Him. All forms of life and existence are made possible by Him. He supervises every expression of life and living thing. Nothing can be or exist except by His will.

This uncomplicated, straightforward doctrine distinguishes Muslims from every other set of people who hold any other idea of “God.” To some people, God is a supernatural being or power, the object of worship. In some world religions (for example, Christianity and Judaism) there is a God who is transcendent, all-powerful, and related to the cosmos as creator. In other religions (for example, Hinduism, classical Greek and Roman religions, and primitive religions) many gods are recognized, with individual gods accorded particular properties and powers. In the Judeo-Christian tradition God, though transcendent and invisible, is believed to have revealed Himself in history through the life and response of the people of Israel, and, in the Christian tradition, supremely and finally in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (ﷺ), the “Christ,” all as quoted in the Church and officially approved religious documents, otherwise referred to as the Old and New Testaments. The conviction that Jesus (ﷺ) stood in a unique relation to God led to the development in Christian thought of the Trinitarian concept, in which a “one God” is regarded as and addressed as three beings (father, son, and holy spirit) of one substance.

In this discourse Allah (ﷻ) uniquely provides accurate information about Himself. And because the Jews and Christians have a concept of God that has been distorted by their own peculiar histories, the record is set straight for them and for the rest of humanity to acknowledge and affirm.

Other *āyāt* highlight a historical Jewish deviation, when they said that ‘Uzayr (Ezra) is God’s son. An anthropomorphic God who begets children is mentioned in the Old Testament.⁹ But the scriptural wreckage of the present-day Old Testament means that nothing mentioned in it is reliable; and anything that is inconsistent with the divinely-protected Qur’an can be taken as false.

Christians have also tainted the concept of God. Later on in the Qur'an, Allah (ﷻ) describes how some Christians believe that God is the "third of the three," and how some Christians say that God is the "Christ, son of Mary." Some Christians adopt the Messiah and his mother as deities, thereby replacing God Himself. Then they go beyond that, elevating their clergy and monks to a status of overlordship above human beings.

In the mainstream Western tradition, influenced by classical Greek philosophy as well as Christianity, God is conceived as "being itself" or "pure actuality" (St. Thomas Aquinas), in whom there is no unactualized potentiality or becoming; as absolute, infinite, eternal, immutable, incomprehensible (that is, unable to be comprehended by human thought), all-powerful (omnipotent), all-wise (omniscient), all-good (omnibenevolent), and everywhere present (omnipresent). He is also said to be impassible. The fact that the New Testament sums up its understanding of God as *love* (1 John, 4:7–8),¹⁰ coupled with the apparent fact of evil in the world, has led to various bifurcations in this traditional Western conception. Thus God is sometimes understood as all-good but finite, and therefore unable to prevent evil; or as bipolar: in one aspect absolute and infinite but in another aspect, in so far as He relates to the cosmos, relative and finite (panentheism or process theology); or as comprising the whole of nature (pantheism).¹¹ Corresponding to particular concepts of God are particular understandings of God's power in relation to human beings and the world of nature. These vary from absolute transcendence, in which God is responsible for initiating the world's processes and laying down its laws, thereafter letting it run its course (deism); to total immanence, in which God is understood, within the world, as a non-transcendent power or spirit, motivating human beings. Orthodox Christianity seeks to preserve both the transcendence and immanence of God.

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, philosophers have tried to prove the existence of God by reason alone (that is, not by divine revelation), and of these attempts the *ontological* arguments of St. Anselm and Descartes, the *Five Ways* of St. Thomas

Aquinas, and Kant’s moral argument are among the more famous and abiding.¹² While the general philosophical consensus seems now to be that none of these arguments compels belief, discussion in the last century of various aspects of individual arguments has continued unabated. Attempts to disprove the existence of God or to show concepts of God to be incoherent have likewise generally failed to persuade.

There are many other doctrinal and theological misconceptions of God. Allah (ﷻ) speaks in the Qur’an about people who deify angels or spirits, or the Sun or the Moon, or even idols. Some of them “rationalize” this veneration and religious zeal by saying, **“We worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to God” (39:3).** Yet all of this confusion dissipates with these few abundantly clear words of the Qur’an, **“Allah — there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being.”**

This *āyah* not only sets its adherents on a separate mental course, but also sets them on a separate behavioral course that distinguishes them from others who are fumbling around trying to reconcile their minds and hearts with partial truths and serious misconceptions. Irregular and aberrant ideas about God will have negative consequences on a person’s conscience and behavior. Only a precise and accurate concept of God makes possible a healthy relationship with Him.

A Muslim chooses and adopts these words of truth about God and secures for himself and the society around him the possibility of a wholesome life, a life of meaning and purpose. But those who choose any other concept or impression about God will find that their personal and social lives are beset with tensions and contradictions. Life becomes inundated with mental difficulties and practical problems. That is why some people run away from religion and God altogether. Others decide to fabricate the best theological concept possible to fit the circumstances. These people need to know that God is perpetual, and that through His will, human beings can gain direction and significance in life. **“There is no divine being except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being.”**

After stating this absolute oneness and unity of Allah's (ﷻ) essence and attributes, the discourse reveals another significant fact: the source of all “religions,” scriptures, and revelations is one,

Progressively He bestowed upon you from on high this divine Writ, setting forth the truth which confirms whatever there still remains [of earlier scriptures], for it is He who has bestowed from on high the Torah and the Gospel in times past, as a guidance to mankind, and it is He who has bestowed [upon man] the standard by which to discern the true from the false.

Behold, as for those who are bent on denying Allah's manifestations [in man's affairs], distressful suffering awaits them: for Allah is Almighty, an Avenger of evil (3:3–4).

These *āyāt* are, a direct response to “scripturalists” who deny the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ) and the status of the Qur'an; they make it clear that the source of all scriptures is the same. It is Allah (ﷻ) who gradually revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad (ﷺ) in the same manner and with the same message as was in the Torah and the Injil (Gospel), revealed to Moses and Jesus (ﷺ) in earlier times, respectively. The fact that a Book has been sent down from Allah (ﷻ) and that vulnerable men are receiving it on the other end (earth) defines both the distinction and the relationship between divinity and conformity, or between Allah (ﷻ) and man. It is farcical to try to blur this line by “raising” humans to the status of God or by “lowering” God to the status of humans. There have always been recipients of Allah's (ﷻ) guiding words (scripture) and they have always been humans. Even the immediate recipients — the Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ) — were human.

Another fact implicit in this *āyah* is that the contents, message and purpose of these scriptures has been the same. The Qur'an sets forth the truth, and it reasserts the message that had been sent in earlier scriptures, the Torah and the Gospel. The common thread that binds these scriptures is guidance to mankind. This

final scripture, the Qur’an, provides a standard by which to distinguish the true from the false in what remains of the earlier ones. Jewish and Christian religious ideas now have truth and falsehood mixed together; the Qur’an can be used as a guide to separate between what remains of the original scripture in Jewish and Christian ideas, and the deviations that have subsequently crept into Jewish and Christian theology for various reasons. These *āyāt* also implicitly fault those Christians and Jews who take issue with this final Scripture, the Qur’an, which in essence and in fact affirms the earlier scriptures, the Torah and the Gospel.

The second segment of these *āyāt* is an ultimatum to those who deny Allah’s (ﷻ) presence and involvement in human affairs. They are reminded and warned that Allah (ﷻ) is all-powerful, omnipotent, coercive, and compelling. He is also vengeful and retaliatory. The *kāfirs* are a class of people who are set in their minds and determined in their conduct to deny Allah (ﷻ) any involvement in man’s social and collective decisions and lives. They cannot tolerate Islam as a *dīn* — a framework for human actions and aspirations. There are people who claim to be Christians and Jews, but when it comes to reshaping life in the mold of their scriptures, they deny and oppose this approach, thus establishing themselves, in reality, as *kāfirs*. This is their grudge against Muslims; they have found a “secular” alternative to living according to scripture, and now they want the Muslims to do the same. And if the Muslims refuse, Jewish and Christian fear, enmity, and hatred are and have been unrelenting. All the power of these people of “convenient scripture” has turned against the Muslims of scripture, Muslims of substance, and Muslims of *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*. It is in this context that Allah (ﷻ) warns, “...agonizing torment awaits them, for Allah is Mighty, an Avenger of evil.”

One of the characteristics of these tricksters is that they think they can get away with their chicanery if the Muslims are not privy to their inner circles; and Muslims do not often have access to these Judeo-Christian inner circles. But Allah (ﷻ) does, “**Indeed, nothing on earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah.**” This is why the Jews who have almost made a religion out of hiding their reli-

gion, and the Christians, who preach love and practice war, will never be able to escape Allah's (ﷻ) scrutiny. They have gained much experience in disguising their conceit from the Muslims, especially those Muslims who do not avail themselves of the knowledge of these Qur'anic insights, but they cannot disguise or hide their character and intentions from Allah (ﷻ). Their self-centeredness and racism, whether expressed as religious racism or racist religion, are addressed obliquely in this divine sentence, **"He it is who features you in the wombs as He wills."** Why, then, do the followers of the Torah and the Gospel try to justify racism within religion? It is Allah's (ﷻ) will to have formed and shaped us in the wombs of our mothers the way we are, be we white, black, brown, yellow, or red, so who are they to use scripture to the disadvantage of those who do not look like themselves? Imperialism and Zionism both are end-products of their wilfully faulty reading of scripture.

This is also a way of helping Christians confront the subtle and not-so-subtle racism in their claim that Jesus (ﷺ) is the "son of God." It is Allah (ﷻ) who made Jesus (ﷺ) while he was in the womb. Jesus (ﷺ) was not a God in the womb, nor before or after that; he was not a begotten God; he was not a dual-nature God, combining humanity and divinity; he was not God, period. All of these illogical and unnatural statements about Jesus (ﷺ) have no basis in scripture, prophetic history, or sound reasoning. Imagine if contemporary Christians were to come to suspect that Jesus (ﷺ) was "black." This would probably cause most of them to renounce Christianity, "are you trying to tell me God's son is black!?" Yet why should Christians be offended by such an assumption, when the Holy Land where Jesus (ﷺ) was born and raised is closer to Africa than it is to Europe? In fact, whether he was either black or white is not the point; the point here is that European-dominated Christianity would feel threatened if the "image" of Jesus (ﷺ) were to change from white to black. Imagine the psychological impact if all the renditions of Jesus (ﷺ) as a white European were replaced with ones of him as a black African. Is it a coincidence that to this day Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians have never had a non-European as head of any of their churches?

Then the words of Allah (ﷻ) systematically expose those individuals and powers whose hearts veer away from the truth as they part from the strong and clear meanings manifested throughout the Qur’an. Instead they go looking for implicative or “semantic” readings that can be used to obscure the nature of divinity rather than to clarify it. And then they claim that they alone have the capacity to produce authoritative interpretations of figurative, metaphysical, and inferential *āyāt*. But in the final analysis it is really only Allah (ﷻ) who knows their decisive and definitive meanings. In the meantime,

...those who are steeped in knowledge say, “We are committed to all of this Scripture [with its explicit meanings and its implicit ones],” albeit none takes this to heart save those who are endowed with insight.

“O our Sustainer! Let not our hearts be out of line with the truth after You have guided us; and confer upon us the endowment of Your grace; indeed, You are the [faithful] Giver of Gifts. O our Sustainer! Certainly, You will gather humankind together to witness the Day about [the coming of] which there is no doubt; verily, Allah never fails to fulfil His promise (3:7–9).

It has been reported that the Christian deputation from Najrān said to the Prophet (ﷺ), “Do you not say that the Messiah is God’s word and spirit?”¹³ By asking this question they sought to gain recognition of their own interpretations and beliefs concerning Jesus (ﷺ): if he is God’s spirit, then he could conceivably be God or a god. They take these allegorical words from the Qur’an and try to ignore the many other direct words that emphatically state the singularity and indivisibility of Allah (ﷻ). These *āyāt* emphasize categorically that Allah (ﷻ) has no associate and no son in any way, fashion, or form. These *āyāt* were disclosed to account for and respond to these types of people who want to seize on a few *āyāt* and disregard other candid, outspoken, and forthright ones. And these eccentrics are not limited to some Christians;

there are people of other persuasions who want to distort and misrepresent inferential *āyāt* in the Qur'an to fit into their personal preferences or their idiosyncratic interpretations.

But Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn* has core meanings that are beyond question and basic principles that cannot be disputed. These have been the nucleus and substance of scripture since time immemorial. Some are issues pertaining to the historical record and the world of the *ghayb* that are beyond sensual verification; the only authentic and reliable information concerning these phenomena is what the Qur'an says about them. Sometimes man is not given the kind of details that he thinks would make it easier for him to understand the conclusive and final meaning of an *āyah*. The reason is that there are some things beyond the rational grasp of man.

So there will always be people who prefer to dissect the allegorical *āyāt* in the Qur'an, causing confusion and controversy, in order to justify themselves or their opinions, or at least to introduce doubt among the Muslims. In the process they omit and neglect the bulk of the Qur'an, which is clear on the very issue they are stirring up for purposes that can be traced to their own egotism.

But those who, in addition to rational knowledge, also have experience, insight, and maturity say, **“We are committed to it [the Qur'an]; the whole [of it] is from our Sustainer.”** They admit that whatever comes from Allah (ﷻ) is the truth, the whole truth, and the holy truth. They admit the limitations of their minds and realize that the range of their thoughts is modest and conditional. These people of profound knowledge are comfortable with the fact that the Qur'an is from Allah (ﷻ); their minds never doubt it. There are things within Allah's (ﷻ) knowledge that He discloses to man, but which he may never be able to fully understand. That is not because Allah (ﷻ) wishes to alienate peoples' minds but rather because He wants to capture their hearts, when both mind and heart are working together.

There are also modern scientists who think they know everything, or are close to it. They obtain their PhDs, and believe they have conquered the universe. And if there is any issue they cannot address, they pretend it does not exist. Sometimes they want to

impose their human understanding on objective or neutral facts. From this angle, they attempt to downgrade the absolute and the infinite to their subjective and time-bound understanding. They are among those who would do well to read and understand the meanings of these āyāt in the third sūrah of the final, authoritative, divine Scripture.

The context of the revelation of the first 83 āyāt of Sūrah Āl 'Imrān may have been related to the arrival of the Najrānī Christian mission in Madinah. This is reported to have consisted of 60 persons, 14 of which were high-ranking figures in the Christian hierarchy at the time. They were led by their most eminent and leading religious figure. When the issue of Jesus, son of Mary (ﷺ), was brought up and they heard Allah's (ﷻ) words on this subject they turned defiant, asking, "Who is the father of Jesus (ﷺ)?" Three of them spoke out. One said that Jesus the son of Mary (ﷺ) is a god, because he brought the dead back to life; another said that Jesus (ﷺ) is the son of God, as he had no father; and another said that he is one in a trinity. They cited Jesus (ﷺ) saying "We did" and "We said," arguing that, had there been a distinction between God and Jesus (ﷺ), he would have said "I did" and "I said."¹⁴ This is how the Prophet (ﷺ) addressed these Christian missionaries,

"Do you not know that a son resembles his father?" They said, "But of course." He said, "Do you not know that our Lord is alive and does not die; and that Jesus succumbed to death?" They said, "But of course." He said, "Do you not know that our Lord is in control of everything, offering preservation and sustenance?" They said, "But of course." He said, "But does Jesus do that?" They said, "But of course not." He said, "Our Lord configures life in the womb as He wills. Our Lord does not eat, drink, or evacuate the bowels; does He not?" They said, "But of course." He said, "Do you not know that Jesus was an embryo in his mother's womb; she gave birth to him as any mother would; he was nourished like any baby. He used to eat, drink, and have a bowel movement?" They said, "But of course." Then the Prophet (ﷺ)

said, if this is the case then how can Jesus be what you claim he is?" They were silent.¹⁵

It was within this atmosphere that this discourse of 83 *āyāt* was revealed and needs to be understood.

Two Kinds of *Āyāt*

The seventh *āyah* of this *sūrah* indicates that the content in this Book of information and wisdom can be divided into two categories. One is characterized as *āyāt muḥkamāt* (clear and unambiguous). The other one is called *āyāt mutashābihāt* (allegorical and inferential). The former *āyāt* have clear and plainly comprehensible meanings. But the latter ones, the *āyāt mutashābihāt*, have extrarational meanings and content; and because of the limitation of human knowledge and human understanding there may be a conflict in the mind of man between what the words apparently mean and what they imply. Examples include *āyāt* that speak of conditions and facts that are not earth-specific, time-constrained, or human-centered, such as the description of the world and life to come. This whole issue had to be cleared because some Christians were trying to use *āyāt* of the Qur'an itself to prove their point of view against that of the Prophet (ﷺ). In particular, they focused on their understanding of 'Īsá (ﷺ) being, on a human-divine continuum, more divine than human.

Some *āyāt* in the Qur'an that serve as examples of *āyāt muḥkamāt* — understandable and distinct *āyāt* — are,

Say, "Come, let me convey to you what Allah has [really] forbidden to you: do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to any beside Him; and [do not offend against but, rather,] do good unto your parents; and do not kill your children for fear of poverty..." (6:151).

For your Sustainer has ordained that you shall conform to none but Him. And do good to [your] parents Should

one of them, or both, attain to old age in your care, never say “Ugh” to them or scold them, but [always] speak to them with reverent speech... (17:23).

These plain and direct *āyāt*, which constitute the bulk of the Qur’an, explain the injunctions of required human behavior, they draw an outline of belief for the human mind, and they specify what is permissible and what is not. These *āyāt* of the Qur’an are clear and unmistakable; they do not tolerate alternative meanings or interpretations. They are referred to in scholarly circles as *umm al-kitāb* — the genesis and the foundation of the Book. Other *āyāt*, as well as other Islamic sources, such as the Hadith, build upon the meanings of these core and fundamental *āyāt* (*muḥkamāt*). If we encounter *āyāt* that might generate confusion or contradictions in our minds, we must refer these *āyāt* to the *muḥkamāt* and understand them in accordance to the clear and unequivocal meanings of the *muḥkamāt*.

An example of an *āyah* that can cause misunderstanding and confusion is,

The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was but Allah’s Apostle — [the fulfilment of] His word, which He had conveyed unto Mary — and a soul created by Him (4:171).

Taken out of context, this sentence can be misrepresented to support the deviated beliefs of the Christians. Some Christian missionaries have said even the Qur’an states that the Christ Jesus (ﷺ) is the fulfilment of God’s word, which He had transferred to Mary (ﷺ), and Jesus (ﷺ) is also a soul created by Him, implying that Jesus (ﷺ) is both God and man in one. But were they honest enough to quote the whole *āyah*, and to understand this particular section in light of the rest of the *āyah*, they could not have generated such a false reading of the issue. In full, the *āyah* reads,

O followers of the Gospel! Do not overstep the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs, and do not say of

Allah anything but the truth. The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was but Allah's Apostle, [the fulfilment of] His word which He had conveyed unto Mary, and a soul created by Him. Believe, then, in Allah and His Apostles, and do not say, "[Allah is] a trinity." Desist for your own good. Allah is but One God; utterly remote is He, in His glory, from having a son; unto Him belongs all that is in the heavens all that is on earth, and none is as worthy of trust as Allah (4:171).

These selective listeners and readers should read on and know what Allah (ﷻ) says in other *āyāt*,

[As for Jesus] he was nothing but a servant [of Ours] whom We had graced [with prophethood], and whom We made an example for the Children of Israel... (43:59).

Verily, in the sight of Allah, the nature of Jesus is as the nature of Adam, whom He created out of dust and then said to him, "Be" — and he is (3:59).

This Qur'an has to be read and understood as a whole; when we do so, the *āyāt* that appear at first to be beyond the range of our comprehension will be better understood in light of the *āyāt muḥkamāt*.

Other *āyāt* that can be misunderstood and cause confusion when they are read out of the context of the Qur'an as a whole include the following,

Lo! Allah said, "O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause you to die, and shall raise you unto Me... (3:55).

The Most Gracious, established on the throne of His almightiness (20:5).

The hand of God is over their hands... (48:10).

These *āyāt* can be interpreted in a number of ways, and the most literal interpretations are not the correct ones. To understand them correctly, they must be viewed on the basis of the clear meanings of the *muḥkamāt*; but they could also be misunderstood or misrepresented if they are taken out of the broader Qur’anic context. Christians should be advised that it is not for them to pluck *āyāt mutashābihāt* out of the Qur’an and then quote them out of context to serve their own purposes. Christians and others who pick at small details while failing to see the larger Qur’anic picture need to open their minds to understand the full and correct meanings of the Words of Allah (ﷻ), such as, **“Never did the Christ feel too proud to be Allah’s servant, nor do the angels who are near unto Him” (4:172).**

When the Qur’an is taken as a whole, it is all *muḥkam* (enlightening and informative). This fact the Qur’an itself states, **“A divine writ [is this], with manifest meanings that have been made clear in and by themselves, [and have been] distinctly spelled out as well...” (11:1).** This plainly means that the Qur’an is eloquent and expressive, with coherent and consistent meanings. Wisdom is its substance. But the Qur’an is also described as *mutashābih* (indefinite and indistinct), **“Allah bestows from on high the best of all teachings in the shape of an open-ended divine writ” (39:23).** Some of its meanings are “open-ended,” pending the maturity of the human experience, the development of science, and our arrival in the life to come. It is when the Qur’an is read on the basis of this knowledge, given us by the Qur’an itself, that we can understand it without inconsistencies or confusion. **“Had this Qur’an been issued from any but Allah, they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction!” (4:82).**

When it comes to the few *āyāt* in the Qur’an whose meanings are not immediately clear, the majority of people can be secure in the fact Allah (ﷻ) has knowledge of them, along with those who have substantial and root knowledge. These are the ones who say, **“We are committed to it; the whole [of the divine Writ] is from our Sustainer,”** albeit none takes this to heart save those who are **endowed with insight.** The hallmark of well-grounded scholars is

the humility that their knowledge and understanding brings them. The acquired knowledge does not inflate their ego; on the contrary, they express meekness by saying

“O our Sustainer! Let not our hearts deviate from the truth after You have guided us; and bestow upon us the gift of Your grace: indeed, You are the [genuine] Giver of Gifts. O our Sustainer! Indeed, You will gather humanity together to witness the Day about [the coming of] which there is no doubt; indeed, Allah never fails to fulfil His promise (3:8–9).

Compare these words and this state of mind with scientists today who think they know everything there is to know; some of them are convinced that if science cannot prove or demonstrate something, it cannot be true.

The End Result of *Kāfir* and Israeli Rejectionism

From here the consummate words of the masterful Qur’an reveal the destiny of those who are against thinking and behaving with Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in human life. There is a God-given social law that they cannot escape: their sins and corrupt decisions will bring about their ruin. And if people who are supposed to belong to scripture join the *kāfirs*, then they too will end up destroying themselves. One way of causing Allah’s (ﷻ) social laws to turn against the God-denying peoples is their enmity to this *dīn* of Islam. Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) is instructed to give them an ultimatum. They are reminded of the course of their war against Muslims at Badr. They saw with their own eyes how the small Muslim army defeated their technologically superior forces,

Behold, as for those who insist on denying the truth [of Allah’s power presence], neither their worldly possessions nor their offspring will in the least avail them against Allah; and it is they, they who shall be the fuel

of the Fire! [To them shall happen] the like of what happened to Pharaoh’s people and those who lived before them: they gave the lie to Our [power] manifestations — and so Allah took them to task for their sins, for Allah is severe in retribution.

Say to those who take a firm stand on denying the truth [of Allah’s power presence], “You shall be subdued and garnered into Hell — and how evil a resting-place!” You have already experienced a manifestation [of Allah’s power presence] in the two legions that met in battle, one legion fighting in Allah’s cause and the other denying Him; with their own eyes [the former] saw the others as twice their own number, but Allah reinforces with His succor whom He wills. In this, behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see (3:10–13).

These *āyāt* are presented as a public statement to the Children of Israel. They are put on notice that if they defy Allah (ﷻ), they will meet with the same end and suffer the same consequences. The Israelis should have been moved by the analogy of the followers of Pharaoh and their doomed fate. At that time Allah (ﷻ) vanquished Pharaoh’s convoy and saved the Children of Israel. But this does not mean that the Israelis were given a *carte blanche* to do whatever they wanted from then on. And it also does not mean that they have a racial privilege that gives them the right to treat other people with contempt and prejudice. If they choose the arrogant ways of the *kāfirs*, they will be dealt with accordingly. If these Israelis behave like Pharaoh, who denied Allah’s (ﷻ) power over man’s social and behavioral life and from whom they were once delivered, then these Israelis will be defeated, just as Pharaoh was.

Israelis and others are reminded of the battlefield of Badr that was strewn with the corpses of Qurayshī *kāfirs*. The Nile in the time of Moses (ﷺ) and Badr in the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) are two reminders of Allah’s (ﷻ) active involvement in human affairs. Allah’s (ﷻ) laws cannot be rescinded. If the Israelis want to champion the enemies of Allah (ﷻ), that is their choice; but they will

suffer the consequences of their choices and actions. The fact that they are nominally followers of a particular religious school will not protect them from the end-result of their deeds. The only possible redemption is to turn back to Allah (ﷻ) and recommit themselves to Him.

Those who persist in denying the truth [of Allah’s power presence], neither their worldly wealth nor their progeny will in the least help them against Allah; and it is they, they who shall be the combustible material of the Fire!” (3:10).

These people, like so many others, think that if they have money and communal influence, they have it made. These things, to them, translate into power, prestige, and material comfort. But they are of no use when it comes to that inescapable Day. Allah (ﷻ) does not change His word: they shall be kindling for the Fire. Their defiance of Allah (ﷻ) in this world has made them the type of material that feeds the fire of Hell. Their antagonism to Allah (ﷻ) and His cause in this world has demoted them to be the stuff of the fire.

And learn from the pharaonic lesson. As has happened to the Pharaoh’s people and those who preceded them: they denounced our [power] manifestations [in human affairs], and so Allah took them to task for their sins, for Allah is vehement in retribution (3:11).

This is a divine law that applies to all societies. Once a society begins to ignore or challenge Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in human affairs, it is doomed. The rise and fall of civilizations can be attributed to this fact. No social unit on earth can continue to exist and prosper once it turns against Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence within society itself. No society can feel secure when it disputes this essential attribute of Allah’s (ﷻ) power.

So this is a divine law that applies to any order or unit that opposes Muhammad (ﷺ) and all who are upholders of these facts. It

is only fair to put such deviating societies on notice before it is too late. In this case the Israelis may have been suffering from memory failure about what happened to the Pharaoh and his people centuries earlier; so the Prophet (ﷺ) drew their attention to what happened to the contemporary pharaohs from Makkah at Badr,

Say to those who continue to deny the truth [of Allah’s manifested power presence], “You shall be overpowered and pressed together in Hell — and how wicked a resort. You have already had a presentation [of Allah’s power presence] in the two battalions that met in combat, one battalion fighting in Allah’s cause and the other opposed to Him; with their own eyes [the former] saw the others as twice their own number, but Allah fortifies with His support whomever He wills. In this, behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see (3:12–13).

One way of understanding the latter part of these *āyāt* would be to say that the Muslims at Badr saw the *kāfirs*, who came with 1,000 warriors compared to the Muslims’ 300, to be twice their actual number. This would have a motivating effect on the Muslim warriors who would have to redouble their efforts to defeat their enemies. The subject of the sentence may be also understood to refer to the *kāfirs*: **with their own eyes [the *kāfirs*] saw [the Muslims] as twice their own numbers.**” This would mean that Allah (ﷻ) made the *kāfirs* think they were outnumbered instead of them far outnumbering the Muslims, leading to a sense of demoralization.

What is important here is that when the dust settled the victory had come from Allah (ﷻ). The reason is that Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence worked for the committed Muslims and against the enemies of Allah (ﷻ). That was true hundreds and thousands of years ago and it is true today, tomorrow, and for eternity. This is a law of divine origin and supervision. The problem with the derelict Muslims of today is that we have not put this law to the test. Muslims have been fighting; but few have done so strictly on

Allah's (ﷻ) terms. But after decades of degradation and humiliation, the pulse of the Muslims is getting stronger and a new generation of Muslims is willing to prove the validity of this Qur'an and this *āyah* not in debates but on the field of battle. Some Muslims become anxious; they want to see immediate results, but often results are not immediate. When Muslims bind together, then the results will be expedited.

The practical lessons of these *āyāt* are, firstly, that the *kāfirs* will be punished in the fire of hell and their wealth and material resources will be of no use to them; and secondly, that governments and their societies will collapse when they take on Allah's (ﷻ) committed *mujāhids*. It is in this arena that Allah (ﷻ) expresses His power and the *kāfirs* are foiled and crushed. This law is as strong in the social habitat as the law of gravity is in the natural habitat. It worked before. And Allah (ﷻ) wants us to understand that it will work again, and again, and again.

[To those sinners shall happen] the like of what happened to Pharaoh's people and those who lived before them: they disputed and attacked as false their Sustainer's power presence [in social and behavioral issues], and so We destroyed them in return for their sins and offenses, and caused Pharaoh's company to drown, for they were evildoers all (8:54).

And Allah preserved him from the evil of their scheming, while suffering vile encompassed Pharaoh's people — the fire which they had been made to contemplate morning and evening — for on the Day when the Last Hour dawns [Allah will say], "Make Pharaoh's folk enter upon suffering most severe!" (40:45–46).

Victory is contingent upon Allah's (ﷻ) will in accordance with His ultimate wisdom. Committed Muslims are due Allah's (ﷻ) help. Victory should not be attributed solely to technological superiority or sheer numbers. When Allah (ﷻ) is involved, as He

certainly is when His committed subjects are doing His will at the war front, it is confidence in Allah (ﷻ) and devotion to Him that will make the difference. The few may score a resounding victory over the many, **“How often has a small brigade defeated a giant brigade by Allah’s permission! For Allah is with those who are patient in adversity” (2:249).**

Temptation for Deviation Rooted Deep in Human Nature

The next section of *āyāt* proceed into the inner recesses of human nature, where the temptation for deviation is rooted. These *āyāt* explain this area of human psychology in order to raise awareness of temptation. This awareness helps to consolidate the discipline that resists or destroys deviation at its source. All of this is done within a Muslim frame of mind that looks to Allah (ﷻ) for help and anticipates Allah’s (ﷻ) redemption from the consequences of things that tempt and entice.

Man, if he is wild and untamed, will indulge his worldly desires. He will want to satiate his lusts and other appetites, be they carnal, sensual, or material. Unrestrained, the periodical satisfaction of animal and material urges can consume the better part of a human being’s time, energy, and life. In time, it becomes a vicious circle of bodily stimuli and responses that eventually lowers the moral and social standards of humans and society. Man begins to lose sight of his mission on earth (*khilāfah*) and his honorable duties that come with an intimate relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

These impulses have, however, a vital role to play in the nature of human life, existence, and pursuits. That is why there are no references to suppressing or inhibiting these human inclinations altogether. All that is expected of man is to tame and discipline these strong feelings. He is required to control and channel these intense feelings, not to wage an internal war against them. Man should be the master of his strong and spontaneous inclinations, and not the other way around. If man does succumb to his compulsions, desires, and appetites, he enslaves himself to passions, even obsessions. And man was born to be free, even of his own cravings and partiality.

Allah (ﷻ) loves man so much that He would not leave him unequipped against his instinctive impulses that have the potential to conquer him. He advises and counsels man with words and wisdom meant for his mind and the pursuit of happiness, but not only or mostly in a sensual way. There is in this *naṣīḥah* (advice), a higher and more lasting bliss, reserved for those who show discipline in this earthly existence. They preserve their higher character to merit a higher reward, which is only a lifespan away; and the span of a life is known only to Allah (ﷻ).

In one stroke, an *āyah* combines all of the most attractive desires in human life. Man has a deep-seated longing, leaning, and love for women, children, wealth, land, livestock, and the best possible of possessions. These are objects of men's dreams, either in and of themselves, or because of their ability to generate power, status, respect, and even more passion and zeal. Immediately to follow is another set of attractions in another world: gardens with rivers flowing beneath them, immaculate mates, and above all Allah's (ﷻ) acceptance, approval, and favor. All of this awaits those who in their worldly life were mentally and emotionally with Allah (ﷻ). So consider the meanings in the following *āyāt*,

Alluring to man is the sensual pleasure of [biological] urges for women, and children, and heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, and the [possession of] the fastest modes of transportation, and farm animals and lands. All this may be a sensual pleasure in this world, but the most attractive of all goals is with Allah.

Say, "Shall I tell you of better things than those [earthly pleasures]? For those who are on guard [concerning Allah] there are, with their Sustainer, gardens through which running waters flow, therein to abide, and spouses pure, and Allah's fine acceptance." And Allah sees all that is in [the hearts of] His servants — those who say, "O our Sustainer! Behold, we are committed [to you]; forgive us, then, our sins, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire;"

[and] those who are patient in adversity, and true to their word, and truly devout, and who spend [in Allah's way], and pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts (3:14–16).

This tendency to temptation is located in the very fabric of human nature. There is something inside of man that draws him toward these inviting and seductive pleasures. No one can deny that every normal human being has a drive for the things listed in the *āyah* above. There is no need to downplay this attraction, nor is there a need to declare war against it. These are the undeniably appealing diversions of self-indulgence, stark and simple. These impulses and stimulations are essential elements of life, for purposes of procreation and human development. But then man also has the ability and instinct to check these drives. Man has the potential and capacity for discipline and goal-orientation, as well as both idleness and self-indulgence. This parallel inclination for a higher call should act to discipline and condition the temptations of short-term appetites.

Almost all humans are fiercely attracted to the opposite sex. This attraction is something that is felt once puberty sets in. But how does one behave when this emotional and physical need intensifies and threatens to become consuming? Should this feeling be indulged in the kind of romantic expression, where sexual relations are dishonorable and obscene when they occur without love? Is it possible to have societies that make it next to impossible to live a romantic expression of love? Is this love expressed by walking in the moonlight with someone you love? Is it candlelight and roses? Is it the belief that there is only one true love, a perfect mate that each person is fated to meet? Is it best expressed as a state of mind, an attitude toward sexuality that celebrates love and works to keep it alive?

The yearning deep inside the human body and psyche for sexual satisfaction in and of itself will not be fulfilled in a healthy way when a person parts from Allah (ﷻ) and His guiding words in this regard. The spark of sexual lust is in the man; this much is implic-

it in the above *āyah*, given that it refers to women as the object of sexual desire. But what happens when this physical need is not tempered by an internal voice of conscience restraining this drive for satisfaction and self-fulfilment? Or, to put it frankly, what happens when man chooses not to listen to Allah's (ﷻ) guidance and ventures into the world to satisfy his sexual needs in any way he can? The answer is that such an undisciplined (unguided) human is the type of individual who is out of control and a society full of such individuals can expect to spiral into decadence. In the first instance, assuaging the urge for sex without ethics and principles will lead a person to have multiple affairs with multiple mates at multiple times in multiple conditions, resulting in multiple problems, impairments, and afflictions.

The most obvious of these problems and afflictions, at both the individual and societal level, is the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. AIDS (Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome) is the most conspicuous of these nowadays, mainly because it is terminal, incurable, and easily spread by the exchange of bodily fluids.¹⁶ Some sexually-transmitted diseases, such as syphilis, have been controlled and almost eliminated by medication. However, many are far more common than AIDS and in some cases are treated almost as normal and inevitable. These include gonorrhea, herpes, crabs, and chlamydia. Although these may be viewed primarily as individual problems, they present an almost insurmountable public health obstacle in addition to other deleterious social impacts, making them blights on society as a whole.

There are also psychological and behavioral problems that can develop through unrestrained pursuit of sexual satisfaction. One is sexual addiction. Addictive behavior can be both physiological or psychological. In the case of sex, one can become addicted to either the physical release of sexual energy, or to the psychological boost associated with physical intimacy. Either way, the results are similar to those identified with addictions to other things, such as drugs or alcohol. Further problems can include extreme, perverse, or deviant sexual appetites, either because of addiction, or for additional physical or psychological reasons. These include general

promiscuity, homosexuality, and more specific perversities, often known as fetishes, such as sadism/masochism, transsexualism, sexual aggression or violence, submissiveness, etc.¹⁷ Whatever the precise causes of these modes of behavior, and the forms they take, all are beyond the range of normal behavior.

The spread and normalization of these sorts of sexual deviance have profound social effects. These include the weakening of institutions such as marriage and family, the early and damaging sexualization of children, and so forth. These in turn generate further problems. According to some opinions, children who feel neglected may learn to seek punishment in order to get attention. They misbehave and are rewarded with physical and emotional punishment. Abused children often grow up to be child-abusers.¹⁸

Another example is what happens when the sexual spark in man is directed toward a child. The mistreatment of children is not something new. It happens every time people decide that their “personal freedoms” are more important to them than Allah’s (ﷻ) care for them. That is why the public nowadays hears and reads about crimes against children. Fiction and drama make much use of incest and child rape.

What can be said when the human nature that Allah (ﷻ) endowed man with begins to deviate, pervert, and degenerate? Allah (ﷻ) created man in such a way that the two genders are intensely attracted to each other; the sensual and emotional satisfaction that man can achieve is among His many gifts. But the distortion of this impulse, like the distortion of other impulses, brings with it immensely damaging consequences for all of society in general.

As men, in an ideological and institutional sense, have decided to deviate from their God-endowed human nature, it is only natural for the power-brokers — who have an interest at some level to present man’s deviation as something normal — to create an academic culture that rationalizes and tries to explain deviant sexual behavior. “Scientists” who sustain this culture theorize about it. Sigmund Freud (1865–1939) is an example.¹⁹ A “behavioral scientist,” he adopted the deviation in human feelings and impressions as the norm in his *Oedipus complex*. This is a psychoanalytic term

describing the alleged erotic feelings of a son for his mother, and an associated sense of competitiveness toward the father. The female equivalent is the *Electra complex*, describing a daughter's supposed jealousy of her mother, love for her father, and blame of the mother's depriving her of a penis. Both terms were coined by Freud to "understand" phases of "normal" childhood development. In reality, he was attempting to explain and normalize what are in truth deviations from the God-given human nature, where the two genders are attracted to each other without the extremes, excesses, and perversities that characterize deviant behavior.

Many Muslims nowadays are blinded by Western social and behavioral sciences, like psychology. Some of these Muslims are 'alims, and really should know better. They flock to Western universities and institutions of higher education to "learn" these sciences because they have not developed their own understanding in the context of the wisdom and insights in this perfect Scripture. Why scholars, of all people, who read and understand what Allah (ﷻ) is saying in these *āyāt*, should ignore the very best information on human nature and turn instead to *kāfirs*, who claim to have understood human beings through behavioral and social sciences, is beyond explanation.

Muslims have learned to favor those ideas that have institutional force behind them, regardless of the foundational philosophies of those institutions. The dominant Western philosophical appraisals of human nature and the atheistic ideological formulations built upon them are based on a man whose impulses are undisciplined, and who is driven to act by his instincts more so than by his rational mind. The key to exciting man's rational potential, and thereby the access to total freedom, is the words of Allah (ﷻ), and not socialization programs promulgated by men in power. The best ideas are based on the best information and the best information comes always from Allah (ﷻ). Allah's (ﷻ) program of social discipline as defined in the Qur'an and as demonstrated by His Prophet (ﷺ) is matchless; it has no rival, just as Allah (ﷻ) has none. In fact, all Western social science thrusts, based as they are on a Darwinian orthodoxy, have produced nothing but behavioral

confusion and social catastrophe. All we have to do is to take a look at the world around us.

For those who are willing to think and study, take the first sentence in this *āyah*, **“Made attractive to people is the sensual love of women...”** Are Muslim minds so regressive and redundant as to be incapable of understanding the meaning of this *āyah* without recourse to modern social research? Most people know the feeling that captures the hearts of two lovers. But does everyone know that it is a noble feeling and not one of filth or guilt? The way it is put here in the Qur’an does not cast this emotional connection in a negative light; so why should people do so? Where are the studies that would explain the substantive meanings of this *āyah*? Living out this relationship should be honorable and dignified. It should not be moved into the extremes that result from the absence of divine direction. Sometimes people even think of physical intimacy as a dirty thing; at other times they become completely brazen and unreserved about it. In both cases they are wrong; they are reacting to their inner ignorance or defiance of God, or demonstrating the extremes that characterize human nature when it is alienated from its Creator.

Another issue that merits more attention from Muslims who are willing to place their intellect in the Qur’an is why there is, in many societies, a separation between sex and love? One unusual feature of Islam is that, properly understood and practiced, it does not clash with human nature; the most it does is regulate and discipline the excessive tendencies within human nature, without in any way trying to quash or repress it. Some schools of psychology talk of repression and inhibition, and how these result in complexes of one sort or another. Historically, there has generally been a general denigration of sex, especially in the Western context. From an Islamic understanding, sexuality is part of human nature, and therefore cannot be considered filthy or dirty. But those unfortunate ones who have no access to what Allah (ﷻ) says about this issue may find themselves caught between two forces. One of them suggests that sex, which is an integral part of life, health, and survival, is unclean, indecent, and disagreeable. These internal

thoughts may have their origins in religion, custom, or superstition. This “criminalization” of sex can be traced to the erroneous perception that it is a sin or a satanic impulse.

The other force that is as ingrained in a person’s human nature as life itself is man’s natural physical drive. This urge is irresistible, as it needs to be, as sex is a vital and necessary function in human life. Life could not go on without it; it was made part of human nature for good reason. When there are two opposing forces tugging in opposite directions inside a person’s mind and heart, he or she begins to feel torn and is liable to suffer psychological damage. Human science has not offered man a psychological and practical explanation for disciplining these physical sexual urges. In the absence of these much-needed words of Allah (ﷻ), man can get lost. He goes to one extreme, equating sex with animal behavior and hence something to be avoided; then he goes to another extreme, indulging in it without restraint. Humans need this guidance from the Book to know the truth about this blessing. Knowing the truth will spare man the feelings of being torn between the tendencies either to indulge in sexual excess, or to regard it as something bestial that has to be avoided at any cost.

In the Qur’an, Allah (ﷻ) associates the sexual impulse with other human instincts: the desire for wealth, the desire to possess fast and powerful means of transport, and the desire for military prowess. At the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), this would have referred to a spirited horse. Modern equivalents might be fast cars or — especially in modern America — a sleek gun, basically, whatever heightens a person’s sense of pride, and whatever is seen as reflecting strength, power, and stature. The *āyah* also refers to another thing that appeals to people: livestock and fertile lands. These two are seen as indicators of wealth and power; modern equivalents might be big houses. These are the things that man can become preoccupied with. But what does it all amount to? All this may be relished in this world, but if one is looking for something deeper than this immediate pleasure and instant gratification, he should be looking toward the next, impending world. There he will find what is infinitely better,

Say, “Shall I tell you of better things than those [earthly joys]? For those who are on guard [concerning Allah] there are, with their Sustainer, gardens under which running waters flow, therein to abide forever, and spouses pure, and Allah’s goodly acceptance...” (3:15).

These post-worldly pleasures mentioned in this *āyah* are, generally speaking, sensual. But there is a basic difference between the types of pleasurable self-fulfilment in the world to come and their pale image in our current world: the former are reserved for the *muttaqīs* only. They deserve it there because here their hearts were alive with the awe and awareness of Allah (ﷻ). *Taqwá* gives a person a distinguished character; it also gives society a momentum that goes beyond the degrading fear of superpowers or militarized nation-states. When a person has this reverence and concern for Allah (ﷻ) in his deepest thoughts and his strongest feelings, he does not succumb to sexual seductions or materialistic entrapments. Allah’s (ﷻ) presence in a *muttaqī*’s conscience has a chastening and taming effect on intentions and behavior. Thus, when these *muttaqīs* look forward to the pleasures of the life to follow, they know that *sensual* is a relative term and their senses are anticipating whatever Allah (ﷻ) will offer them of His benefactions. They do not think of the sensual as only erotic.

If on earth man is attracted to fertile lands, then in the life to come there will be gardens with rivers streaming beneath them. What is more, these qualities are eternal and their fruit eternal; not as in this world, where fertility is seasonal or subject to capricious circumstances. If on earth human beings are attracted to companions of the opposite sex, in the life to come they will have immaculate partners. As for steeds of speed, livestock, stockpiles of gold and silver, all these were in the world a means to an end. In the world they served to satisfy human lusts. But in the world to come, means to further ends are no longer necessary. Then there is something far greater than all types of sensual yearnings, and that is Allah’s (ﷻ) goodly acceptance and approval. Nothing can come close to matching this grace from Allah (ﷻ).

“And Allah sees all that is in [the hearts of] His subjects...”

He sees our human nature, He sees our internal inclinations, He sees our internal thoughts, He sees our temptations and weaknesses. He also sees what can discipline such internal proclivities. So He offers His guidance and solutions. It is up to us to consider and follow what He tells us and spare ourselves the destructive alternatives; or we may choose not to listen to Him and suffer the consequences. The choice is ours.

These subjects of Allah (ﷻ) who have a heightened consciousness of Him say,

“O our Sustainer! Behold, we are committed [to you]; forgive us, then, our sins, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire,” those who are patient in adversity, and true to their word, and truly devout, and who spend [in Allah’s way], and pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts (3:16–17).

It should be understood that these subjects are placing themselves in an active position in their relationship with Allah (ﷻ). It is active because they use the word *rabbānā* (our Sustainer); they do not use the word *ilāhanā* (our Lord/God). That is because they know and acknowledge that Allah (ﷻ) is present in their daily lives, and they need Him to sustain or nurture their effort. And their effort in this context is to make the transition from being contained and possessed by the attractions of this passing life to becoming fixed and focused on the life to come. It is very important to call Allah (ﷻ) in the manner that corresponds to our need for Him.

Then they say **“we are committed [to You],”** which places them in a position of responsibility. There is no notion of a vague faith or a theoretical belief. This is a covenant with and commitment to Allah (ﷻ) that has the potential of delivering them from the urges they have for the sensual attractions in this transient world. This *du‘ā* implicitly acknowledges the frailty of human nature, prone as it is to errors. So they say, **“forgive us, then, our**

failings, and keep us safe from the torment of the Fire.” There is nothing arrogant about Muslims who are aware that they are subjects of Allah (ﷻ), and who live with the fact that they are dwarfed by the power of Allah (ﷻ). In this position and from this understanding they ask Allah (ﷻ) to grant forgiveness and to spare them the agony and pain of the Fire. These words come from dependents of Allah (ﷻ) **“who are patient in hardship, and true to their word, and actively asking Allah, and who spend [in Allah’s way], and pray for forgiveness just before the break of day.”** Consider these characteristics one by one,

1. **“Patient in hardship”** – the quality of being patient, as in the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain without complaint, loss of temper, irritation or the like. These committed Muslims should have the ability or willingness to suppress restlessness or annoyance when confronted by delay or things not happening according to plan. They are characterized by a quiet, steady perseverance, and even-tempered care. The unique feature of patience denotes qualities of calmness, stability, and persistent courage in trying circumstances.
2. **“True to their word”** – they do not break their promises and they do not backtrack from their principles; they will not twist and contort their word to give it another meaning. They adhere to Allah (ﷻ) as they rise above helplessness. Lying, in effect, is the lack of strength in expressing the truth. The rationale is that people lie to avoid danger or to gain an advantage.
3. **“Actively asking Allah”** – this is so germane to Muslims who feel the pressure of the threats around them and know that there is no one to turn to for help except Allah (ﷻ). Remember, it is Allah’s (ﷻ) right to have His subjects call on Him at times of difficulty and hardship. No one else deserves or merits this solicitation except Allah (ﷻ).
4. **“And who spend in Allah’s way”** – when Allah (ﷻ) is receiving *du‘ā’s* (supplications) from those in need of His help, people in need should be receiving benefits from those who are affluent and can help. Giving is an expression of being free from the domination of money or material wealth. It is a move

to consolidate brotherhood and to dilute selfhood. The real world needs people who care by spending of what they abundantly have and not people who bury the issues of poverty in words and empty theories.

5. **“And pray for forgiveness just before the break of day”** – this is a time when the human awareness and receptiveness seem to be at their best. It is also a time when the spirit and soul are less agitated and more in tune with self and nature than at any other time. If a person asks for forgiveness during this time he does so with everything around in synchrony with his soul and mind. What do these types of characters earn? Allah’s (ﷻ) acceptance, which is more than any luxury, pleasure, or leisure can be.

On this subject, two hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ) add further clarity. It is reported that Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*The most damaging sedition I leave men with [after passing on] is women.*”²⁰ This has often been misinterpreted as a basis for blaming the male gender’s weakness in this regard on the female; it should rather be understood to refer to the possible consequences of the male’s failure to control his own urges and the consequences of permissive, promiscuous, and undisciplined sexuality in a licentious society.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said,

*The world is pleasure and joy; and the best pleasure and joy in the world is a virtuous woman. If her husband looks at her she makes him feel cheerful, if he requests her [to do something] she obliges, and in his absence she upholds his integrity in the way she behaves and in her oversight of his wealth.*²¹

The Prophet (ﷺ) himself encouraged the disciplined and balanced love of women, “*Most dear to me of your world are women, and fragrance, and the delight of my heart is in ṣalāh.*”²²

Another instinctive love in man is his attraction to money and what it can buy. On this subject, the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

*If the son of Adam had a valley full of money, he still would want a second valley. And if he had two valleys full of money he would still want a third valley. But in the end, only dirt will fill his abdomen. And Allah will forgive he who turns to Him in repentance.*²³

Wealth need not be renounced for its own sake. Wealth in and of itself is a gift and a privilege from Allah (ﷻ). The problem arises when man acquires wealth and begins to feel self-important, self-centered and self-indulgent, **“Indeed, man becomes excessively arrogant when he thinks of himself as being self-sufficient” (96:6–7)**. But if a Muslim disperses out of his wealth what is due to Allah (ﷻ) and to the people in need, and if he is grateful to Allah (ﷻ) for the wealth he has, and if he uses his wealth to consolidate family relations, and spends it for the cause of Allah (ﷻ), this same wealth becomes a way of approach to Allah (ﷻ).

Justice in Society Begins with Allah (ﷻ) as the One God

Allah [Himself] offers evidence — and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge — that there is no deity save Him, the Upholder of Equity; there is no deity except Him, the Almighty the Truly Wise.

Behold, the only [true] *dīn* in the sight of Allah is [man’s] self-surrender unto Him; and those who were granted revelation aforetime took, out of mutual jealousy, to divergent views [on this point] only after knowledge [thereof] had come to them. But as for him who denies the truth of Allah’s manifestations, behold, Allah is swift in reckoning!

Thus, [O Prophet], if they argue with you, say, “I have surrendered my whole being to Allah, and [so have] my followers.” So say to those who received scripture before you, “Do you also yield [to Allah]?” If

they do, they are guided; if they turn away, your duty is only to convey this message, and Allah sees His creatures [clearly] (3:18–20).

These *āyāt* encapsulate the true concept of God, deity, divinity, and authority. It has always been and will always be the integral unity and the absolute singularity of Allah (ﷻ). He is the only Creator. He is the only Author of life, He is the only Sustainer of existence, and He is the only Source of justice. This was described at the beginning of this *sūrah*, “Allah — there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being!”

This is not merely a theological statement; but rather an *āyah* that is meant to set man’s mind straight about Allah’s (ﷻ) oneness and how that singularity should impact man’s practical behavior on earth. This Qur’anic statement is also meant to set the record straight after Allah’s (ﷻ) singularity had been obscured by people who trace their religious faith to previous divine scriptures. This scriptural statement of fact is meant for all peoples of the world, regardless of their formal religious history or their current theological position. The truth is the truth, and the most important truth, that underlies all reality, is that man’s Creator and Maker is one, unique, singular, and indivisible.

It should be enough for anyone to hear these words from Allah (ﷻ) Himself testifying that there is no supernatural being worthy of divine status and heaven-to-earth authority except Him. The problem is with the multitudes who, upon staking a claim to scripture (the Old and New Testaments), believe in “one God” but then contend that He has a son or some analog. Even some *mushriks* profess to a belief in Allah (ﷻ), but then go on to ascribe associates, rivals, sons, and daughters to Him. This direct quote from Allah (ﷻ) in this incorruptible Book should serve to bring everyone back to the fundamental truth and the basic fact: Allah (ﷻ) is the One and Only singular God.

Once this truth has been established by persuasion and conviction, other issues follow from it. One is that Allah (ﷻ) does not accept human conformity to any other beside Him. This conformity

(*‘ibādah*) is expressed by man’s self-surrender (*islām*) to Allah (ﷻ). This surrender is not a matter of mere theoretical confession of Allah’s (ﷻ) oneness; in fact, such a confession should produce practical human activity and behavior. It has been a permanent feature of history that some make much of their belief in One God, but then in practice demonstrate their subservience to those who explicitly or implicitly deny or challenge God. This they do partly by adopting laws and modes of behavior that come from their rulers, governments, and other institutions instead of those that come from Allah (ﷻ) as the first and final authority. These supposed believers in the oneness of Allah (ﷻ) willingly follow kings and presidents who are rebels against Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and His Book. These theoretical believers thus become, in practice, deniers of Allah (ﷻ), as their values, standards, morals, manners, and strategies are influenced less by the scriptural laws of Allah (ﷻ) than by the unscriptural laws of the land. This psychosocial dissonance denies and contradicts Allah’s (ﷻ) words when He says, **“Allah [Himself] extends evidence... that there is no deity/authority except Him...”**

The angels also bear witness to the fact that Allah (ﷻ) is the only authority and deity there is. They know this because of their nature: they do not disobey Allah (ﷻ), but do what they are instructed to do. They are in a closer natural proximity to Allah (ﷻ). They know of His oneness as a matter of function. The real people of knowledge also know this to be the truth, because true knowledge is a consistent and logical body of insight and understanding. This uniform body of organized information cannot exist without some ultimate source that establishes and supports its coherence. This is true of any field of knowledge such as chemistry, astronomy, biology, medicine, physics, mathematics, or history. The people who are strongly grounded in their area of specialization affirm there is no authoritative deity besides Allah (ﷻ), **“So those who are deeply entrenched in knowledge say, ‘We are committed to it; the whole [of the divine Writ] is from our Sustainer...’”**

What is particularly noticeable in this context is that after Allah (ﷻ) affirms the fact of His singularity, He states and testifies to a very relevant certainty, **“Allah [Himself] proffers evidence —**

and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge — that there is no deity/authority besides Him, the Upholder of Equity...” Equity in this *āyah* becomes a central feature of divinity. Equity is an inseparable part of “**the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being**” as indicated at the start of this *sūrah*.

Equity or justice is an essential definition of Allah (ﷻ). Life, existence, and being are maintained by Allah (ﷻ) who also upholds their stability by means of justice (*qist*) and balance (*mīzān*) in the essence of the cosmos. If people were left to their own attempts at justice they could not manage to do so in the absence of this Godly disposition. If human life were to disappear, and all intelligent life to vanish from existence, the universe would function properly in a manner of “justice” because everything else is subject to Allah’s (ﷻ) physical laws (the “laws of nature” as some people call them). But when a human being comes into this existential equation, the situation changes, as humans are capable of good and bad, virtue and vice, and progress and regress. Allah’s (ﷻ) care for man is so profound that He chose not to leave man on his own, trying and erring endlessly. He chose to focus man’s efforts and achievements on justice. That is why man is taught by this pure Book that Allah (ﷻ) Himself is the guarantor of this all-purpose equity. Unless humanity accepts this level of justice from heaven man will have nothing but injustice on earth.

There are two distinct sources for the modern Western discourse on justice: the Greek philosophical inquiry into a rationally coherent account of the good and constitutional arrangements which reflect and express justice; and the Judeo-Christian search for God’s justice expressed initially in the Prophets’ (ﷺ) call for justice and the endeavor to embody divine justice in a covenant community. Each source has produced a tradition of reflection on justice that is very much alive today. The two traditions have interacted in many ways through the ages, sometimes being understood as complementary, and at other times as being in sharp opposition to one another, in creative or destructive tension.

The Greek tradition of discussion about justice is rooted in the classical thought of Plato and Aristotle. Plato’s main treatment of

justice is *The Republic*, in which the voice of Socrates is used to describe the ideal state, where the culmination of truth, beauty, and goodness achieves perfection.²⁴ Here the discussion is located in an Athens where traditional certainties about justice, virtue, and the good have been deeply shaken. No longer can fundamental questions be determined simply by reference to the tradition.²⁵ Justice, Plato said, may be found both in societies and in individuals. In each it is a fundamental principle giving structure to the whole and determining the relation between its parts. As justice may more easily be described in the macrocosm, the main part of the dialogue is devoted to an account of the just state, which is presented as a magnification of the virtues and relationships to be found within each just soul. In each, justice is understood as the proper harmonious ordering of parts, so that each performs its proper role and finds its own fulfilment in contributing to the good of the whole.

Aristotle's account of justice, developed most notably in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, distinguishes between *universal* and *particular* justice.²⁶ Universal justice is directed at the good of the community as a whole, and is complete virtue in the fullest sense; it is not one virtue among others, but virtue as a whole. As in Plato, this is a virtue of communities as well as individuals, the cohesive principle of a good society. Particular justice is divided into *distributive* justice and *rectificatory* justice, more or less what are known today as *social justice* and *criminal justice*. Particular justice regulates the exchange of goods and penalties among people; while protecting the legitimate interests of the individual, it assumes that all should be concerned for the common good.

The discussion of justice flowing from Plato and Aristotle gives justice a pivotal place in morality and in the structure of the social order. It also assumes that the discussion can be pursued on a rational basis with very little or no reference to revelation or religion, although it is generally assumed that justice has a transcendent as well as objective grounding.

The main thrust of the biblical understanding of justice has to do with faithfulness and a relationship based on a covenant. God is proclaimed to be just (Psalms, 7:9, 103:17; Jeremiah, 9:24), and in

His dealings with the world and with people, the meaning of justice is ascertainable. Within the Jewish covenant relationship God's justice is experienced and known. God expects justice of His people (Isaiah, 5:7). Only in the doing of justice is God to be known; acting unjustly is in itself a withdrawal from God. God's justice demands a special concern for the weak and the poor, for the widow, the stranger, and the orphan (Exodus, 22:21–2; Deuteronomy, 10:18, 14:29, 15:7; Psalms, 82:3–4, 103:6, 140:12); indeed this justice seems to be the heart of Israel's faith and worship, and something that must be embodied in Israel's legislation. It is injustice above all that induces protestations against societal inequity and prejudice from the Prophets (彌).

In the New Testament Jesus (彌) is presented as calling people to seek first God's kingdom and His justice (Matthew, 6:33). God's justice is therefore to be made manifest in history; it is a gift of God and also a call to seek true justice on earth. Jesus (彌) himself is the just one (Acts, 3:14, 7:52) who has become man's justice (1 Corinthians, 1:30). Justice is therefore to be learned from his teaching and from his life. Many of Jesus' (彌) parables proclaim a justice that is more than fairness, which contrasts sharply with worldly standards of justice. The laborers in the market-place all receive the same, no matter how long or hard they have worked (Matthew, 20:1–16); the returning prodigal (profligate) receives preferential treatment, the opposite of "his due," as his elder brother is not slow to point out (Luke, 15: 11–32).

Jesus' (彌) fellowship with tax collectors, prostitutes, and other marginalized and despised groups suggests that God's justice reaches out to the forgotten and the excluded to affirm their worth and reestablish their relationship with Him. And when Jesus (彌), the innocent one, stands before Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea, and is condemned, two understandings of justice are in direct opposition — the legal, expedient justice of the Roman power and the holy justice of God "personified in Jesus (彌)" (John, 18:28–19:22).²⁷ He was born to give testimony; and justice would only be realized in the Kingdom of God. For this justice he is said to have died on the cross. Thus, behind the question of Pilate,

“What is truth?” arises another still more important question, the eternal question of mankind, “What is justice?” The Pauline teaching on justification, suggesting that while men are sinners God still accepts that as just, indicates that God’s justice is concerned with healing, reconciliation, and the restoration of relationships. But the fullness of God’s justice is only to be realized at the end, when the kingdom is fully present.

The Western Judeo-Christian understanding of justice drifts into confusion when it comes to a God who is the Upholder of justice and equity on earth as well as in the heavens. The failure of the Christian concept of justice is demonstrated in its continual historical inability to address and oppose the power structure that was responsible for what Christians regard as the “crucifixion” of “God’s son.” Obviously the Roman government’s action, in terms of the mainstream account of the execution of Jesus (ﷺ), is a grand violation of justice by any measure. Why, then, is the Christian theology and philosophy since that time, and to this very day, incapable of addressing the injustices of such power structures? The quick answer is that, in the first generations following the ascension of Jesus (ﷺ) to divine company, the establishments managed to promote those from within the Christian rank and file who would not pursue justice against those who seek to kill Prophets (ﷺ) or otherwise oppose the tyrannical power of worldly rulers.

The Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions of justice interacted from the beginning. St. Augustine, in *De Civitate Dei* (*Of the City of God*), distinguishes true justice, which must be understood in the light of the divine justice that is manifested in Jesus (ﷺ) and only fully realized in the heavenly city, from the partial and provisional justice, which is the best that can be achieved in the earthly city.²⁸ Earthly justice must be measured against divine justice; without a serious search for justice a state becomes demonic. St. Thomas Aquinas, as part of his capacious synthesis of Aristotle and the Christian tradition, sees the two modes of justice as largely complementary. Martin Luther, on the other hand, sees earthly justice as often apparently, and sometimes in reality, opposed to the justice of God.²⁹ Earthly justice, he argues, is God’s “strange work,”

which sometimes seems in conflict with His proper work. Probably some tension between the two ways of understanding justice is inevitable, or even desirable, given that the secularization of Christianity is by definition aloof from the larger issues of justice at the level of governments and states.

The truth only comes out in what is substantiated by the complete Book: Allah (ﷻ) Himself is the Maintainer of justice. And in the course of human history it is only at times when humanity harkened to Allah (ﷻ) and His justice-centered scriptures that it was able to observe equity and fairness as standards and values in its social and legislative pursuits. Man has to realize that justice will remain illusory and elusive as long as man is alienated from Allah (ﷻ) and His Book. Propriety and even-handedness between races, nationalities, classes, or individuals can never be established by secular and irreverent man. This fact was demonstrated in the past century by the rise and fall of socialism. This century may offer mankind another piece of evidence that proves the infallibility of this Qur'an, and we may in our own lifetime witness the final collapse of capitalism. Both these crashes within Western civilization are due to the fact that socialism and capitalism are incapable of maintaining either justice between individuals or in societies.

Should the native Indians in North and South America be asked about justice? Or should the African American slaves be asked about justice? Or should the victims of colonialism and imperialism around the world be queried about justice? And this justice is supposedly the one entrenched in the Judeo-Christian religion and philosophy! Is it not time for the forsaken souls of this Western house of horrors to come out and see the light: that there is no authoritative deity besides Him, **“the Upholder of Equity and Justice,” “the Invulnerable, the Truly Wise”**?

When Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) became the authority and the leader of Madinah, two learned men, probably bishops, from the Levant came to see him.

Upon seeing Madinah, one of them said to the other, “...this city looks much like the one that is foretold to be the city of the

prophet who will come in latter times.” When they approached the Prophet (ﷺ) they immediately recognized his prophetic qualities. They asked him, “Are you Muhammad?” He said, “Yes.” They said, “Are you Aḥmad?” He said, “Yes.” Then they said, “We have to ask you about a testimonial; if you answer us correctly we will confirm your status and commit to your revelation.” The Prophet (ﷺ) told them to ask their question, so they said, “Inform us of the most significant testimonial in God’s Scripture.” And in response Allah (ﷻ) instructed His Prophet (ﷺ) to quote, **“Allah [Himself] testifies — and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge — that there is no deity save Him...”** The two high-ranking Christians then accepted and declared their belief that Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ).³⁰

In the *āyah* at the end of the hadith, Allah (ﷻ) confirms and states in plain language that He is the One Deity who is in charge of everything on the basis of justice. The issue of justice is not left up to semantic philosophizing or religious apologetics. The issue of justice flows with the fact that acquiescing to Allah (ﷻ) carries with it an assimilation into His presence and a fulfilment of His orders. When humans are committed to Allah (ﷻ) they know what to do and how to go about doing it, so that the issue of justice is a permanent fixture in human affairs, human relations, and human behavior. Allah’s (ﷻ) words ferment in the heart of man when He says, **“Behold, Allah demands justice, and the doing of good...”** (16:90). Allah (ﷻ) also says, **“Behold, Allah orders you to honor your trusts with those who are entitled to them, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice...”** (4:58).

The fact that grows in every Muslim heart is that Allah (ﷻ) is fair in His laws: both social laws and natural laws. The spiritual and the material have a sense of justice in them without either smothering the other. Wherever man looks there has to be a quality of justice: justice has to define man-to-God relations; justice has to define an individual’s relationship with society, as well as society’s relationship with that individual. Justice has to be a lasting

feature between man and his fellow man, between the races of mankind, and between those who have more than what they need and those who have less than what they need. The justice that flows from Allah (ﷻ) belongs to Him as *al-'Azīz*: the Impregnable, the Almighty, and the Inviolable; and it belongs to Him as *al-Hakīm*: the Wise, the Prudent, and the Knowledgeable.

In this situation of bipolarity between God and humanity, two assertions and certainties have to be established. One of them is that Allah (ﷻ) is the deity and divinity without rivals, derivatives, or equals; the other is that man is human and therefore weak, vulnerable, and wanting. Therefore man's humanity needs guidance and Allah's (ﷻ) divinity offers him what he needs. This human relationship with Allah (ﷻ), once it is understood in these terms, can only be a relationship of human subordination to Allah's (ﷻ) power and wisdom. Therefore,

Behold, the only [true] *dīn* in the sight of Allah is [man's] self-surrender unto Him; and those who were vouchsafed revelation aforetime took, out of mutual jealousy, to divergent views [on this point] only after knowledge [thereof] had come to them. But as for him who denies the truth of Allah's manifestation [in human affairs], behold, Allah is swift in reckoning.

Thus, [O Prophet], if they argue with you, say, "I have surrendered my whole being to Allah and [so have] all who follow me!" And ask those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime, as well as all unlettered people, "Have you [too] surrendered yourselves unto Him?" And if they surrender themselves unto Him, they are on the right path; but if they turn away, behold, your duty is no more than to deliver the message, for Allah sees all that is in [the hearts of] His creatures.

Indeed, as for those who deny the truth of Allah's [power] manifestations, and kill the prophets against all right, and kill people who demand justice, announce to them a harrowing castigation. It is they whose

works shall come to nothing both in this world and in the life to come; and they shall have none to give aid to them (3:19–22).

The concept of One God brings with it the concept of a uniform relationship with Him. Once people recognize with their hearts and minds the supremacy of this One God they have no choice but to follow that up with the recognition of their dependence and need for Him. Man has suffered a terrible history of running away from the concept of God altogether because he came to believe that there were other “gods” dominating and influencing humanity. In its reaction to this horrible abuse of “religion” and misrepresentation of divinity, mankind has suffered the unfortunate fate of throwing “God” out of its life because those it took as “gods” were incomprehensible, repressive, or represented by corrupt and egotistical “religious” leaders.

Humanity has had difficulties finding justice with Allah (ﷻ), but the problem is of its own making. If human beings cared to look into this exact Book with all the mind and heart Allah (ﷻ) has given them, they would have no second thoughts about recognizing Allah (ﷻ) as just, fair, and impartial.

“Behold, the only [true] *dīn* in the sight of Allah is [man’s] self-surrender unto Him.” This does not mean that *Islam* — man’s self-surrender to Allah (ﷻ) — is a repressive “church.” Notice that it does not necessarily mean that *Islam* is a proper noun like *Christianity* or *Judaism*. The proper relationship of human activities with Allah (ﷻ) is that all of them should fall within psychological and mental acquiescence to and humility before Allah (ﷻ).

When the word *Islam* is used nowadays, it is distorted because it is capitalized, written with a capital *I*. But any time words of similar meaning, such as *surrender* or *submission*, are used, the first letters of these words are not capitalized. This is another way of conveying the wrong impression about the word and the concept. And to complicate matters further, the media generated hysteria, for all practical purposes, equates “Islam” with terrorism. Let us be clear about ceding authority to Allah (ﷻ): this yielding to Allah

(ﷻ) is not meant to be a religion that competes in the global market of belief systems and worldviews. It is not a cultural variation that adds an exotic touch to the cultural diversity of the world. It is not a “theory” that is only worth considering when all other theories have gone bankrupt. Nor is it a spiritual refuge for those who have been burnt out by hedonism or materialism. Yielding to Allah (ﷻ) is not a matter of personal rituals that are routinely offered in the forms of *ṣalāh*, Hajj, or *ṣawm*. This is not the self-surrender that Allah (ﷻ) means when He says that He will not accept any other *dīn*. Islam is our unconditional and informed resignation to and compliance with Allah (ﷻ). Islam is obedience to and reverence for Allah (ﷻ). So this Book has to become the arbiter of human affairs because it is the Word, Speech, and Message of Allah (ﷻ) to all humanity.

This yielding to the will of Allah (ﷻ) acknowledges His high quality and favorable position vis-à-vis human beings and human life. This being the case, there can be no confusion between Allah’s (ﷻ) “self” and the selves of His Prophets (ﷺ) as became a point of contention among people of previous scripture, who confused God’s “self” and the Messiah’s “self.” The confusion was exacerbated when they blurred the line between God’s will and the will of Jesus (ﷺ). This then became a major point of contention between different groups of Christians, leading to bloodshed and war. But why should “religious” people differ and for that matter go to war? The answer is here, **“...and those who were vouchsafed revelation aforetime took ...to divergent views [on this point] only after knowledge [thereof] had come to them.”**

The differences that led scriptural peoples (Christians and Jews) to bloodletting and warfare were not the result of ignorance; Allah (ﷻ) had supplied them with ample evidence of His singularity via His Prophets (ﷺ), and scriptures. Had they referred to the truth, the truth was there for everyone to accept and adhere to. They had no excuses for ignorance. But they chose to disagree as a matter of *baghyān baynahum* (aggression and hostility toward each other). This confrontational attitude has taken many different forms over subsequent generations: some of them claimed God is

theirs, others said the son of God looked like them, and others turned God’s inclusive scripture into an exclusive racist religion. The entire tangled histories of these misguided peoples stem from the time when they first set aside, and subsequently forgot, the fact that God — the God of all humanity — is just and equitable.

Divergent attitudes toward the Roman Empire are evident in the earliest Christian writings. This assortment of political views persisted into the second and third centuries CE and beyond. Following the Books of Romans 13 and Acts, apologists writing in defense of their faith stressed that the Christians were law-abiding citizens, who paid their taxes and prayed for the emperors. Were these not the same kinds of emperors who allegedly did grave injustice to Jesus (ﷺ)? They did not serve in the armies, but engaged in what they called spiritual warfare, by praying for Rome’s victory in just wars. This tradition continues to the present day, when Christian churches and clergymen — not all of them, and probably not most of them, but certainly many of them — are happy to lend their prayer and “spiritual support” to the wars of today’s great imperial power, the modern West, led by the US, Britain, France, Russia, and their allies. These “Christians,” who are supposed to know better, go to the White House and sanction such aggressions as the Vietnam War, the war in the Persian Gulf (to “liberate Kuwait”), and other acts of mass murder and military aggression thinly disguised by the name of God and the title of a “just war.”³¹

The non-European sense of justice and the demonstrated ability of peoples in Asia and Africa to stand for justice, even if that meant confronting the powers of the time, was illustrated in their divergence from the European “Christians,” who were more apt to defy God than to defy earthly powers. Therefore, the Christian sects in such places as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the Holy Land differed from Rome. Emperors, like all political figures, would not hesitate to establish new sects if that would mean an extension or a consolidation of their own power, wherever in their empire they deemed it necessary. This is how emperors and kings played around with scripture. The protection, expansion, and projection of their power was their main concern. “God” was a tool they used, and among

their victims were the “Christians” who were not as focused on justice as they were meant to be, allowing themselves to be compromised in this way. This deviation from the true scriptural path no doubt contributed to the mass conversions of Christians to Islam, as the Qur’an was and remains very clear about the importance of justice, even if that means taking on governments, kings, nation-states, and emperors. Such conversions were particularly noticeable in North Africa, where the doctrine of the Trinity was always resisted in favor of the monotheistic understanding of the message of Jesus (ﷺ). In Islam, it is made clear beyond any question or doubt that “religion” is not an instrument of states and potentates.

People who doubt or deny Allah’s (ﷻ) power and His presence in human affairs, as in the tortured history of various peoples of scripture, should know they are in a state of denial of Allah (ﷻ). This does not mean they deny Him in their faith, or by their words and rituals; it means they deny Him in practice and in their everyday lives, when they have more fear of and respect for government or state power than they do for Allah’s (ﷻ) power. And it is for this reason and in this context that Allah (ﷻ) says, **“But as for him who denies the truth of Allah’s [power] manifestation, behold, Allah is swift in reckoning!” (3:19).**

At this point the “religious” and “scholarly” Jews and Christians can be expected to express objections to this understanding of God and of man. And that is why the reply comes immediately from Allah (ﷻ),

Thus, [O Prophet], if they argue with you, say, “I have surrendered my whole being to Allah, and [so have] all who follow me,” and ask those who have been given scripture in past times, as well as all unlearned people, “Have you [too] surrendered yourselves unto Him?” And if they surrender themselves unto Him, they are on the right path; but if they turn away, behold, your duty is no more than to deliver the message, for Allah sees all that is in [the hearts of] His creatures [or conformers] (3:20).

The issue is clear: we are required to subordinate ourselves to Allah (ﷻ). We are not required simply to pay lip service to Him; we are not required to become legalistic Jews or spiritual Christians or cultural Muslims; we are required to cease our opposition and yield to Him. If we do that and we work with Allah (ﷻ) as a power in our daily lives, then we become Allah’s (ﷻ) representatives (*khalīfahs*) on earth. There will be people who want to argue endlessly against this idea. And the word of the Qur’an that responds to these who want to argue this issue is **“If they argue with you [about this issue of Allah’s oneness and justice], say, ‘I have surrendered my [whole] self to Allah, and [so have] those who follow me.’”**

This *āyah* means that the measure of a person’s worth is not in words or rituals; it is in his practical pursuits and his everyday activities. Words are not going to cut it; it takes a complete commitment to Allah (ﷻ) to qualify as acquiescing to Him and obeying Him. And if this is the response of Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ), it should also be the response of all Muslims when it comes to the issue of Allah’s (ﷻ) oneness and His justice. But we Muslims of today are a poor reflection of these words and the Prophet’s (ﷺ) conduct. Many of us behave as though we think that it is enough to believe in a just Allah (ﷻ), while passively watching injustice devour the resources of the planet and waste the lives of millions of human beings on all the continents of the world. These Qur’anic words have no concrete meaning in our day-to-day affairs if we Muslims continue to practice a theoretical and ritual Islam in lieu of a down-to-earth and realistic Islam.

We are supposed to tell the functionally illiterate and the scripturally misguided people, **“Have you [too] surrendered yourselves unto Him?”** But if we do ask them this question, and we ourselves are aloof from practical commitment to Allah’s (ﷻ) work, what weight does our invitation to conform to Allah (ﷻ) carry? Virtually nothing. When the Qur’an does not have a human backbone behind it, it is reduced to words on sheets of paper. But when there is a mass movement of human commitment to the will and power of a just God, then the results can become palpable, and we

can say with confidence, **“And if they surrender themselves unto Him, they are on the right path.”** But there is no path at the moment because we, who are supposed to be breaking new ground and showing people the way to this path, are sitting on the fence and dreaming of a utopia in the afterlife that we think we can enter directly from our dreaming positions on that fence. When mankind is looking for a solution, a way out of its torment, we Muslims are supposed to be setting the pace and showing them the way. But we, as an Ummah, have failed to do so in our generation and time.

“But if they turn away, behold, your duty is no more than to deliver the message.” What do we do when people do not respond to this divine call? There is nothing that can be done except to keep on trying before it is too late. **“For Allah sees all that is in [the hearts of] His creatures.”** The reality of Allah’s (ﷻ) all-knowing and all-seeing has been largely sidelined in man’s mind and conscience. Who is actively thinking of Allah (ﷻ) watching and observing everything that is done, with the awareness that if what is being done is wrong, then Allah (ﷻ), in His capacity as a Dispenser of Justice, will intervene? Some people, Muslims and others, concede that Allah (ﷻ) sees everything and knows everything, but His immediate and direct involvement is not something that concerns most of them. The mind-set that disregards and dismisses Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence from human affairs and activities is not a stagnant mind-set. It follows up its thoughts with plans and projections; it makes strategies and implements them. And it thinks that public opinion and support is the highest consideration it needs to factor into its planning; it thinks that it can do anything it wants to, provided that it fools enough of the people enough of the time to get away with its crimes.

But Allah (ﷻ) has something in store for these types, who think they are not going to be called to account. Allah (ﷻ) has presented mankind with the truth via prophets who received revelations and privileged individuals who receive inspiration,

Indeed, as for those who deny the truth of Allah’s [power] manifestations, and kill the prophets against

all right, and kill people who demand justice, announce to them a harrowing castigation. It is they whose works shall come to naught both in this world and in the life to come; and they shall have none to give aid to them (3:21–22).

Denying the truth of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in this world is in part a theoretical matter. But they do not stop at theoretical differences; they go on to commit atrocious crimes: they kill Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ) and people who are justice-centered and justice-focused. These types of power-dealers are setting themselves up for suffering and agony in this present and familiar life of theirs and in the unknown life awaiting them. All of their elaborate plans and strategies shall come to nothing. The Qur’anic *āyah* is subtle in its description of their schemes and programs; it likens them to an animal whose belly is swollen. But a bloated belly is not a sign of health; it is a sign of disease, and it can continue to swell until the animal perishes. This is how these megalomaniacs are: they think their inflated policies are getting them somewhere, but the only place they are going is to their awful destiny of death and punishment.

Kufr (denial or rebellion) is a very serious offense; starting as a mental opposition or indifference to Allah (ﷻ), it can — in the course of time — become a remorseless force that builds up within its power structure the determination and the rationalization of killing Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ) and people who are committed to justice, in principle and in action. This *āyah* implies the *kufr* guilt of the Yahūd; in their history, they are even known to have plotted the assassinations of prophets. But it could also include all other peoples of scripture, such as contemporary “Christians,” who subsume their identity into “Yahūdī” history and defend the Zionist project, thereby making themselves accomplices in the murder of prophets and their messages, and of those who aspire to justice on earth. “Christian” officials of the Roman empire were responsible for massacres of Christians who resisted the official sect of Christianity that was endorsed by the empire. Some of these Christians were killed because they insisted on upholding the

Oneness of God and the totally human nature of Jesus (ﷺ) against the Trinitarian doctrine adopted by the official church. The committed and active Muslims today, and their predecessors in all the history of Islam, are not the first or only people of faith to fall victim to the convergence of interest between some of those who claim to belong to God and scripture, and those who find it within their means to kill prophets and the peoples who align themselves with justice.

Patterns of God Abandonment by People of Scripture

Have you not considered those who have received their share of revelation [in times past]? They have been called upon to let Allah’s Writ be their law, and yet some of them turn away [from it] in their obstinacy, simply because they claim, “The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days;” and thus the false beliefs which they invented have caused them to betray their *dīn*. How, then, [will they fare] when We shall gather them all together to witness the Day about [the coming of] which there is no doubt, and every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has done, and none shall be wronged? (3:23–25).

The first sentence in these *āyāt* calls upon the Prophet (ﷺ) and everyone affiliated with him to look at the people who have been entrusted with scripture in previous chapters of history, especially the Jews who were given the Torah, and the Christians who received the Gospel. They all had their opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to the singularity of God by following through on his commandments. All these former recipients of God’s word and trust were called upon to adopt Allah’s (ﷻ) Writ as the law of their hearts and the law of their heartlands. This latest moral code, the Qur’an, which has come from the same source,

should be everyone’s reference whenever there are disputes in human life. But the historical fact is that not all of them comply with any scriptural reference; many Jews and Christians break away from this covenant and code. They have become so entrenched in their disregard of God that they assume they will face no consequences for their God-denial.

In our times this God-abandonment has resulted in a world-wide political and economic structure that varies in many respects, but is bound together by one common characteristic: its objection to God as a touchstone for human arbitration. The camps within Christianity and Judaism that turned away from God as lawmaker have devised and rationalized secularism (from the Latin word *saeculum*, referring to time). The temporal is contrasted with the eternal and, by implication, the worldly with the religious. Secularism denotes a turning away from an other-worldliness to a worldliness that only values human achievement. This development took place in the Western world during the Renaissance in medieval European history, when new learning and discoveries tempted people to break from scriptural guidance and confidence in God the Creator.³² Secularism took another significant step forward in the 18th century, with the Enlightenment, when European political theory stressed the potential power of human beings to govern themselves in contrast with the religious theory of the necessity of guidance.³³ Agnosticism, a skepticism regarding the activity of God, has been one facet of secularism.³⁴ Humanism, meanwhile, stresses the value of people and imagines a world order that gives primacy to human welfare.³⁵ Twentieth-century “secular Christianity” calls upon Christians to become involved in the world as the arena of God’s activity. Secularism is applauded as a characteristic only of societies that are open to change, capable of interaction with other societies, and have a contextual framework for values in the absence of God as Lawgiver, and scripture as a source of legal and ethical codes.

“They have been called upon to take Allah’s Scripture as their legal system...” But the Judeo-Christian West deviated from that along the lines of secularism, agnosticism, humanism, and

atheism. But what can be said about people who, being nominal Muslims, behave in effect like those who received previous scripture? How can we classify token Muslims, who may saturate their individual lives with ample doses of Islamic rituals and rites but who are also determined to ensure that the Shari'ah never becomes the defining order of their public and social lives? They want to take Allah (ﷻ) out of public life, reduce Him to liturgical ritual, and then claim they are the holiest people in the world. These Muslims are not an aberration. If Christians and Jews are condemned by the Qur'an for secular offenses against God, agnostic notions about religion, and atheistic philosophies, Muslims must also be condemned if they try to do the same thing with Allah (ﷻ), the Qur'an, and Islam. The Christians and Jews did a hatchet job on their scriptures, permanently depriving their future generations; but what can be said about Muslims who still have an immaculate scripture — the faultless Qur'an — but only a theoretical Islam? If these types of Muslims deviate, despite everything that is available to them, surely they should be condemned in stronger terms than their Christian and Jewish predecessors.

The Qur'an does not leave the reader alone to try to figure out how these types of scripturalists justify doing what they do. It indicates they have departed from Allah's (ﷻ) guidance and gone on sacrilegious and irreverent tangents because, they claim, **"...the fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days,"** and this encourages them to betray their *din*. This is the reason why they shun Allah's (ﷻ) Book. They seriously do not accept the concept of a Day of Accountability and the exercise of divine justice on that day.

The new development is that there are now marginal and borderline Muslims who fit this description. They are secular, agnostic, humanist, and even atheist. They will fight to the bitter end for individual Muslims to believe in and practice an individual, private Islam. But when the issue comes to expanding Islamic ethics and values into Islamic laws that would shape society as a whole, they will use every weapon at their disposal to limit such an understanding of Islam, even though it is the only historical and scriptural

Islam there ever was and ever will be. Islam cannot be emasculated along secular, laic, or materialistic lines.

Some white-tie and titular Muslims who love their tormentors, much as the house slave loves his master, want to convince the rest of us that Islam can only “progress” and Muslims can only become “modern” when we do what the Christians and the Jews have done, which is to separate *masjid* from *imāmah*, or our religious leadership from our political leadership. They want us to believe and affirm that we can remain submissive to Allah (ﷻ) while our moral and legal systems and behavior are subservient to human governments and state authorities. They tell us that when we reach this level of maturity, God can still remain a part of the equation, punishing us for some puny private perversions for only a “limited number of days” in some ambiguous world to come. These Muslims are repeating the same mistake the Jews and Christians made in earlier epochs, and Islamic rituals are not going to shield them from the consequences of the ideas, philosophies, and legal systems they have adopted. Allah (ﷻ) does not accept a commitment with reservations, a half-hearted surrender, or a moth-eaten “Islam.” We have to grow up and understand that our relationship with Allah (ﷻ) will not be normal, acceptable, and honorable unless all our efforts conform to Allah’s (ﷻ) standards, values, and principles as defined in His Book.

How, then, [will they fare] when We shall gather them all together to witness the Day about [the coming of] which there is no doubt, and every human being shall be repaid in full for what he has done, and none shall be wronged? (3:25).

These so-called People of the Book think they are above the law and beyond justice. This mentality extends itself to the life to come: if they are God’s chosen people here in this world, then they are also God’s chosen people in the life to come. Concerning the hereafter, some Jews believe in limited punishment, while others that the punishment will be lenient, and still others that they will

face no punishment at all. All believe that they will, soon or not much later, be going to heaven, regardless of their crimes and misdeeds, because they have a special place in God's scheme. This, they appear to believe, justifies their arrogance and crimes against humanity. There was an earlier *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* that describes this Jewish mind-set,

And they say, “The fire will most certainly not touch us for more than a limited number of days.” Say [to them], “Have you received a promise from Allah — for Allah never breaks His promise — or do you attribute to Allah something which you cannot know? (2:80).

These types of excuses delude human minds when they are prefaced with other assumptions, such as the claim that these scripturalists are “God's children” and His beloved ones, or that their prophets will intercede on their behalf, or that they are the descendants of prophets, or God's chosen race, and so on. On that Day of Resurrection and Judgement all genetic connections will be severed; no amount of money or clan solidarity is going to be of any value. What will talk loud and clear on that Day is man's work and deeds,

But We shall set up justice-balanced scales on Resurrection Day, and no human being shall be wronged in the least, for though there be [in him but] the weight of a mustard-seed [of good or evil], We shall bring it forth; and none can take account as We do! (21:47).

Power Belongs in the Domain of Allah (ﷻ)

Say, “O Allah, Lord of all dominion! You grant dominion to whom You will, and You take away dominion from whom You will; and You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will. In Your hand is all good. Verily, You have the power to will anything. You make

the night grow longer by shortening the day, and You make the day grow longer by shortening the night. And You bring forth the living out of that which is dead, and You bring forth the dead out of that which is alive. And You grant sustenance to whom You will beyond all reckoning” (3:26–27).

The context in which these *āyāt* were revealed is worth consideration. Ibn Abī Ḥātim explains the circumstances in which these *āyāt* were revealed. Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) asked his Sustainer to merge the provinces of the Persians and the Romans into his Ummah.³⁶ In response, the Qur’anic words above were disclosed. In another hadith, Ibn ‘Abbās and Anas ibn Mālīk reported that when Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) liberated Makkah, he promised his Ummah dominance over the Romans and the Persians. And when the *munāfiqs* and Yahūd heard about this they said, “Out of the question, not possible! How can Muhammad gain control of Persia and the Roman Empire? These are well-fortified and protected. Muhammad (ﷺ) should be satisfied with gaining Makkah and Madinah.” And it was in response to this derision that Allah (ﷻ) revealed the above *āyāt*.³⁷

These narrations indicate that Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) was thinking in terms of an Islamic governance extending beyond the Arabian peninsula and the tribal nature of Arabian society and culture. It also confirms that Muhammad (ﷺ) was not merely a spiritual figure whose ritualistic practices inhibited him from thinking and contemplating a “kingdom of God on earth,” ruled by scripture and governed by men of God. This *āyah* was a reminder to Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) and to the Muslims that different forms of governance come and go by Allah’s (ﷻ) will and involvement; He is capable of raising His *dīn* to integrate, in due time, all worldly empires and provinces. Materialists and deniers of Allah (ﷻ) in first-century Arabia (AH) and in 21st-century America (CE), and everywhere in between, do not want to accept this reality. Judeo-Christian scripturalists resist this sterling truth because they cannot accept an apostle who did not descend genetically from “the Children of Israel” and their racist interpretation of prophethood as something specifically Israeli.

It was in this particular social context that a Christian delegation arrived from Najrān, debated scriptural issues with the Prophet (ﷺ), and then, refusing to acknowledge the truth presented to them, returned to Najrān without surrendering to Allah (ﷻ). But even in the face of this rejection by Christian scholars, the truly committed Muslims around Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) were not concerned about validating their *īmān* by the actions of those who considered themselves adherents to prior scripture. They acknowledged Allah (ﷻ), saying, "You are the Sustainer of all governmental domains! You have complete authority. You do Your will on earth as You plan. No one may deter You from Your set course. You give and You withhold prophethood and governance as per Your ultimate knowledge and infinite wisdom. And thereby, You took prophethood and dominion from the Children of Israel by appointing Muhammad (ﷺ), a descendant of Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl (ﷺ), as the final Messenger (ﷺ) to all bearers of responsibility: humans and jinn."

Why are the Muslims of our time not capable of thinking along these lines? We have to understand that in the past, Allah (ﷻ) had chosen to apportion prophethood to whom He willed; and this prophethood was at times divorced from governance. Hūd and Lūṭ (ﷺ) were two prophets who did not govern, and there were others. There have also been many earthly rulers who governed without any scriptural guidance, and some of them may nonetheless have ruled within divine moral parameters. But there have also been examples where Allah (ﷻ) combined prophethood and earthly governance, as was the case with the *āl* (intimates, confidants) of Ibrāhīm, such as Dāwūd and Sulaymān (ﷺ), "**But then We did grant revelation and wisdom to the House of Abraham, and We did bestow on them a mighty dominion**" (4:54).

This being the case, it should not surprise anyone that Allah's final prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), was sent with guidance governing all aspects of human life on earth, and, were it not for scriptural racism, there would have been no reason for the Jews and Christians to be upset with the fact that an Arab was chosen for this role and honor. "[But] Allah knows best upon whom to bestow His message..." (6:124).

“You elevate whom You will and humiliate whom You will.”

Celebrity and notoriety are not necessarily what mainstream society or media make them out to be. They are not defined by power and wealth alone. There are those rulers who are subsequently humiliated. There are also those who have money and power, but are in fact inferior. Similarly, there are those people who are materially poor but retain respect and dignity. The numbers of people in any group also does not mean much. The *mushriks* of Makkah and the *munāfiqs* and Yahūd in Madinah used to boast about their “numerical superiority” over the relatively few who were with the Prophet (ﷺ). Such numerical comparisons are irrelevant when Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence on earth is factored into the lives of the few who rely on this divine power,

[And] they say, “Indeed, when we [the surface Muslims] return to Madinah, [we], the ones most worthy of honor will surely drive out therefrom those most contemptible ones [the Prophet and those dedicated to him]!” However, all honor belongs to Allah, and [thus] to His Apostle and those who are committed [to Allah’s power presence], but of this the *munāfiqs* are not aware (63:8).

It is notable that *tu‘izzu* and *tudhillu* (*You esteem* and *You disgrace*) are mentioned in the context of power. It is also important to note that Allah (ﷻ) drills into the Muslim conscience the fact that power comes and goes, and along with it the trappings of power and its manifestations. Civilizations themselves rise and fall. But the historical and eternal fact remains: all power belongs to Allah (ﷻ), and He allocates portions of this power to humans as He wills. Muslims who read and think out the meanings of this plain-spoken Book are brought back to basics. Here they are freed from the trappings of mortal indoctrination in which they are socialized to believe that kings, presidents, and generals are the real wielders of power. The fact is that Allah (ﷻ) is in control of dominions, and those who claim otherwise, be they presidents in

Washington or tribal kings in Arabia, are but transient and short-lived pretenders.

Power has been defined in a great variety of ways, ranging from physical domination to symbolic empowerment. Of course, for there to be talk of power at all, social scientists must consider such distinctions as the power of individuals over groups as in the power of a leader over his people; or one group over another group, as in colonial domination; or between humans and their environmental resources, as in the power of a collectivity to organize and maintain itself. Social and political scientists in the West have theorized about forms of social organization in non-state and state societies that legitimize the power of specific lineages, classes, or individuals to make decisions pertaining to others' lives and the organization of social and material resources. Conflict theorists have studied factionalism and how claims to power are asserted and contested. Resistance theorists have studied the ways in which those who seek to dominate others through the use of language, ritual, and force are resisted by those seeking self-determination or, in turn, their own domination.

A study of power implies not only a study of social distinctions but also of the inequalities implied in those distinctions. It is apt in this regard that this area of human studies is under Allah's (ﷻ) close scrutiny as He remains the Upholder of justice. Whether a researcher is following Marx in thinking about the extraction of surplus labor or following more recent theorists who have commented on inequalities embedded in racial and gender distinctions, the violation of the norms of justice will remain the determining factor in the shift of power. Power has been regarded by some social scientists as human influence and agency, or as situated outside humanity. Attention to power goes in tandem with attention to powerlessness, although not all theories of power encompass both conditions.

Some social science analyses of power have investigated social stratification and hierarchy; others have looked at forms of social organization which assure that power is not individually concentrated, as in industrial collectives and collectives not organized within state societies. Just as Marx was preoccupied with the question of

how laborers came to give up their labor power, anthropologists have studied how individuals might have historically come to dominate groups and how one group might have come to dominate another.³⁸

Social studies of institutional power must engage the debates formulated within sociology about structure and agency. C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) argued persuasively that social stratification and hierarchy are forcefully maintained by the “power elite,” those who, between themselves, mobilize the power to transcend “ordinary” social environments and make decisions that pertain to the lives of people they will never meet, in places they might never visit.³⁹

The power relations between nations and between individuals, defined by colonialism, have been the most important influence, in several ways, on conceptualizing power within social sciences. While colonial political structures gave rise to early social studies of the distribution of power through political systems, they also stimulated a variety of intriguing critiques. Power became an area of intense study whether it pertained to those who have it, the elites, or those who do not, the populace; between colonizers and the colonized; or within societies, where similar power relations, racialized, have been enacted. Colonial and neo-colonial relations between nations became a useful trope (image) for behavioral scientists seeking to critique institutional power and the discipline relating to institutionalized power relations.⁴⁰

What is absent from this attempt to define power is the input of Muslim social scientists. There may be a few unknown Muslim social scientists who have tried to come to grips with the issue of power, but they could never have the audience they deserve because the power elites see to it that the human mind is not permitted to root itself in the Qur’an and establish contact with the people at the same time.

However much power there is in an individual, class, or nation-state the eternal law of Allah (ﷻ) applies, **“In Your hand is all prosperity. Verily, You have the power to decide anything.”** It is this power presence of Allah (ﷻ) on earth and in human affairs that has to become our mental fixation. It is Allah (ﷻ), and only Allah (ﷻ), who has full and unqualified power. His power

works on the basis of justice. If there is any abuse of physical or worldly power it is the responsibility of people who are scripture-centered and justice-focused to oppose such abuse and to support a manifestation of power that parallels Allah's (ﷻ) exercise of it. When we repeat the *āyah* in the Qur'an "**In Your hand is all prosperity,**" this is inclusive of victory, the spoils of a ruined oppressive power structure, innocent glory, resources, and wealth that comes from assuming a responsible position of power based on justice.

Then the *āyah* takes man beyond his immediate preoccupation with worldly and physical power to demonstrate an act of power that man is incapable of,

You make the night grow longer by shortening the day, and You make the day grow longer by shortening the night. And You revive the living out of that which is dead. And You revive the dead out of that which is alive. And You give provision to whom You will beyond all reckoning (3:26).

The first sentence in this *āyah* refers to the changes in the lengths of day and night during different seasons. This variation is a power manifestation (*āyah*) of the One Creator, whose jurisdiction and justice trump all others. No human being, whatever his or her worldly authority, can claim to have power over this phenomenon. No one in his right mind can claim that all of this is happening because of some type of chance.

Then comes the issue of life and death, "**You draw out the living from the dead, and You draw out the dead from the living.**" Perhaps the most fundamental and at the same time the least understood biological problem is the origin of life. It is central to many scientific and philosophical problems, and to any consideration of extraterrestrial life. Most of the hypotheses of the origin of life in the secular mind fall into one of four categories:

1. the origin of life is a result of a supernatural event — that is, one permanently beyond the descriptive powers of physics and chemistry.

2. life — particularly simple forms — spontaneously and readily arises from nonliving matter in short periods of time, today as in the past.
3. life is coeternal with matter and has no beginning; it arrived at the moment of the birth of the Earth or shortly thereafter.
4. life arose on the early Earth by a series of progressive chemical reactions; such reactions may have been likely or may have required one or more highly improbable chemical events.

In one sense, a mind that abandons God begins to make assumptions, and then gets lost in these assumptions. This is another reason why Allah (ﷻ) has sent His word: to give us direction within the range of unreconciled assumptions our mind is capable of making when we leave it to wander and speculate without anchor.

As with the seasonal and geographical variations of day and night, the processes and conditions of life and death succeed one another. Life moves toward death; death slowly gives way to life. Every living minute brings with it a movement toward death. Death in a sense chips away at life, even as life seems to be blooming and thriving. Man is made up of cells, the basic unit of plant and animal bodies, a discrete, membrane-bound portion of living matter, the smallest unity capable of an independent existence. All living organisms consist of one or more cells, with the exception of viruses. Bacteria, protozoa, and many other microorganisms consist of single cells, whereas a human is made up of billions of cells. Life and death exist at this basic level in the biological structure and existence of man; and yet we carry on moving toward death with little thought going into the nature of life on the cellular level. So death emerges from this lifetime of ours in which we think we are enjoying life. On the other hand life itself is produced from this slowly dying human being (it takes him a lifetime to die).

As often as life and death happen around us, it is remarkable how quickly we can set aside these significant events in our lives. Apart from those who are emotionally involved, few seem very moved by the fact that just minutes ago a person was alive and now he is no longer here. The same can be said about the inception of

new life, which begins when a woman's ovum and a man's sperm meet to form the first cells of a new being. This beautiful miracle is little thought of by most of those who become parents. The whole process has embedded in it the Will of Allah (ﷻ) that brings life out of matter; and still people choose not to acknowledge the authority of Allah (ﷻ) in human affairs. How dare this human being, of little power and less influence over the processes of life and death, behave as if he is the center of creation, if not the lord of creation?

All of these genetic and biochemical processes that result in the creation of a baby come under the medical observation of man, but at the other end of the day, in the behavioral sciences, man continues to behave as if he is the dispenser of life and death. The more we understand how little we can control the processes of our own reproduction, the more we should take account of Allah's (ﷻ) words, **“You draw up the living out of that which is dead, and You draw up the dead out of that which is alive, and You allow sustenance to whom You will, beyond all calculation.”**

The two phenomena above, the relationship between night and day, and the relationship between life and death, both remarkable and beautiful processes of creation over which man has no control, should shock us out of our complacent arrogance and into a natural and God-defined position that inhibits us from playing God or acting like God. From the cosmic (night and day) to the cellular (life and death), man does not stand alone. Knowing these facts, we should be the first to realize and admit that **“Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning.”**

Yet, when in a position of power, man too often uses his technology to plunder the resources of the rotating earth; and this same man seeks to pervert through indoctrination and propaganda the human potential located on the spectrum of life and death. And so modern humans have a secular ideology that is religiously obeyed by humans the world over, even by atheists. This secular (*kufr*) ideology has in effect convinced even the Muslim crowd that this secular (*kufr*) superstructure is a source of sustenance and significance. Although the Qur'an has been reduced to something abstract

because of the indifference of the nearly two billion Muslims around the world, and while *kufr* has become a power because of the aggression and determination of its adherents, the overriding facts are,

And no true understanding of Allah have they [who usurp His power], inasmuch as the whole of the earth will be as a [mere] handful to Him on Resurrection Day, and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand. Limitless is He in His glory, and sublimely exalted above anything to which they may ascribe a share in His divinity! (39:67).

He it is who has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with an inner truth. He causes the night to flow into the day, and causes the day to flow into the night (39:5).

Allah extracts life out of dead matter: a tree out of a pit, plants out of seeds, man out of sperm, and a bird out of an egg. Life may have a metaphorical sense too; Allah (ﷻ) enlivens an ignorant person with knowledge, and thus does he come to life. Allah (ﷻ) guides a *kāfir* and he becomes a committed Muslim who acquiesces to Allah’s (ﷻ) will, and thus does he become truly alive. It has also been reported the Prophet (ﷺ) said that Allah’s (ﷻ) greatest name, by which if He is called upon He answers, is included in this *āyah*,

Say, “O Allah, Lord of all dominion! You give sovereignty to whom You will, and you take away sovereignty from whom You will, and You exalt whom You will, and debase whom You will. In Your hand is all good. Verily, You have the power to determine anything” (3:26).

Committed Muslims Do Not Forge Alliances with *Kāfirs*

The preceding reference to Allah’s (ﷻ) power is in preparation for

the following *āyāt* that tell all committed Muslims not to side with those who reject Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in this world. What complicates this problem even more is that those who are opposed to Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in human affairs are the ones who should know better: the common People of the Book (Ahl al-Kitāb). But their line of thought and their action plans dismiss God from involvement in the daily affairs of people and in the rise and fall of their civilizations. These renegade people of scripture, who should listen with concern to Allah (ﷻ) as He presents them with an action plan that includes His presence in conscience and in society, turn their backs on Him. They should know better than to do such a thing; they should realize that He who runs the universe and controls their involuntary impulses is qualified and apt to run their social and inter-communal affairs. In as much as these Bible-toting folks have established their secular deviation away from Allah's (ﷻ) power position in human activities, we, the committed scriptural Muslims, are expected to fill in the scriptural void. But we cannot do that if we squash Islam under the preponderant and perverse influences of secularism. Here are Allah's (ﷻ) words,

Committed Muslims shall not ally themselves with *kāfirs* in exclusion to *mu'mins* — since he who does this is not related to Allah by any measure — unless it be to protect your lives against them [the *kāfirs*] in this way. But Allah warns you to beware of Him, for with Allah is all journeys' end.

Say, “Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or bring it into the open, Allah knows it, for He knows all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth; and Allah has the power to will anything.”

On the Day when every human being will find himself faced with all the good he has done, and with all the evil he has done, [many a one] will wish that there were a long span of time between himself [and that Day]. Hence, Allah warns you to be alert of Him; but Allah is most compassionate toward His subjects (3:28–30).

In the previous *āyāt*, Allah (ﷻ) establishes the fact that He is in absolute control; He is the only ultimate power; He manages the macro- and micro-issues; and He provides according to His reckoning. And if Allah (ﷻ) is in charge of all these vital concerns, what possible excuse could Muslims have for turning to *kāfirs* and *mushriks*, taking them as allies, and planning for the political and economic futures of Muslim societies in accordance with their plans and institutions? These “allies” have made it abundantly clear they are on an irreligious and secular course, which conflicts directly with that of Allah (ﷻ). So why and for what purpose do Muslims throw their lot in with them?

The *āyah* above makes it clear that a conviction and commitment to Allah (ﷻ) cannot be coupled with a conviction and commitment to worldly powers that do not share this commitment. The powers of *kufr* in the modern world — such as the US government, European governments, the Zionists and international institutions like the UN, the World Bank, the ICC, and the WTO — cannot possibly have any common purpose with committed Muslims who advocate a divine “state” on earth.⁴¹ For this reason, the *āyah* goes on to say that any Muslim who enters into this type of alliance or allegiance has no bond with Allah (ﷻ).

Such a political and ideological entanglement of alliance, allegiance, and subservience that rebels against Allah (ﷻ) is precisely what exists today in what is characterized as the Muslim world or the Middle East. But before the explanation moves on to current events, consider first the circumstances in which this *āyah* was revealed. Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, and Ibn ‘Abbās report that al-Ḥajjāj ibn ‘Amr was a colleague and an ally of the three Yahūdīs, Ka‘b ibn al-Ashraf, Ibn Abī al-Ḥuqayq, and Qays ibn Zayd. These influential Yahūd maintained a client relationship with some of the Anṣār, in order to try to undermine the Anṣār’s allegiance to the Prophet (ﷺ).⁴² Other Muslims recognized this situation, so they tried to dissuade the Muslim associates of the Yahūd from exposing themselves to their damaging influence. These Muslims included Rufā‘ah ibn al-Mundhir, ‘Abdullāh ibn Jubayr, and Sa‘īd ibn Khaythamaḥ. When the Muslims who had relations with the

Yahūd refused the advice of the more prescient Muslims, Allah (ﷻ) disclosed this *āyah*, **“Let not the committed Muslims take those who deny the truth [of Allah’s power presence] for their allies [and peers]....”**⁴³

Ibn ‘Abbās reports that this *āyah* was revealed in circumstances concerning ‘Ubādaḥ ibn al-Ṣāmit al-Anṣārī, who had Yahūdī contacts. When Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) was preparing for the military campaign of al-Aḥzāb, ‘Ubādaḥ said to the Prophet (ﷺ), “O Prophet of Allah! I have 500 Yahūdī men [under arms]. I think it would be the right thing to do for them to accompany me on this military campaign, so that we may tip the military balance with them against our [Makkan] enemies.” It was in response to this, according to Ibn ‘Abbās, that Allah (ﷻ) declared, **“Let not the committed Muslims take those who deny the truth [of Allah’s worldly power presence] for their allies...”**⁴⁴

Today, we not only have the shining words of truth showing us the way, but we also have these historical precedents to guide our choices. Allah (ﷻ) tells us that He is the Master of all dominion; He raises in esteem whom He wills and He causes the humiliation of whom He wills; He gives and He withholds; He has power over everything there is. This being the case, committed Muslims should place their confidence, reliance, and trust in Allah (ﷻ), especially when they need Him the most. But do today’s Muslims abide by this clear guidance? Clearly not. Today, Muslims have effectively made a religion of their alliance with and subversion by the enemies of Allah (ﷻ). Take the Camp David Agreements, signed in 1978 by Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, the modern Yahūdī counterpart of Ka’b ibn al-Ashraf, and Egyptian president Anwar al-Sādāt, a Muslim counterpart of al-Ḥajjāj ibn ‘Amr, under the guidance of the American potentate in the White House, Jimmy Carter, in the hope of ending the Palestinian resistance to the Zionist occupation of Palestine.⁴⁵ The attempts of Muslim leaders to make alliance with the *kāfirs* has not fooled the Muslim masses; the so-called “peace process” has been resisted by two major Palestinian *intifādaḥs*, and the struggle of the Palestinian Muslims in and around the Holy Land continues. And this is only one of many examples in

contemporary history of kings and presidents of Muslim countries choosing to become allies and partners of the *kāfirs*.

Allah (ﷻ) commands Muslims not to enter into these types of accords, treaties, and political arrangements with the *kāfirs*, and yet the heads of Muslim nation-states busy themselves with doing precisely the opposite of Allah’s (ﷻ) commands. Not only are they turning Allah’s (ﷻ) instructions upside-down and inside-out, they do so while trying to maintain the image of being pious Muslims! Islam, at its most fundamental level, constitutes self-surrender to Allah (ﷻ); yet these Muslims violate this basic command by surrendering themselves and their peoples to the *kāfirs* — those who are in rebellion against Allah (ﷻ). Many of them adopt impressive-sounding titles; Sādāt promoted himself as *al-Ra’is al-Mu’min* (the Faithful President); Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan’s secular founder, was dubbed *Qā’id-e-A’zam* (the Supreme Leader),⁴⁶ and the king of Saudi Arabia goes by the title *Ḥāmī al-Ḥaramayn al-Sharīfayn* (the Protector of the Two Holy Shrines). And how does Allah (ﷻ) in His own words describe them? **“He who [allies with the *kāfirs*] is not related to Allah by any measure...”**

While the vital meanings of these *āyāt* are clarifying the contemporary situation, there are armies of intellectuals working to bleed the Qur’an of these critical meanings, and succeeding in misleading the Muslims in the process. But this is by no means the only place in the Qur’an where it is made clear that those who shift their loyalties to the *kāfirs*, and who rationalize siding with the Israeli or American governments that are responsible for the injustices and atrocities across the world, are not at all affiliated with Allah (ﷻ). There are many *āyāt* in the blessed Book that confirm this conclusion,

O You who are securely committed [to Allah]! Do not surround yourselves with those who are apart from you [that is, your criterion of *dīn*] (3:118).

O You who are secure and committed [to Allah’s power]! Do not take the *kāfirs* [those who deny Allah’s

power] for your allies in preference to the *mu'mins* [those who uphold Allah's power]! Do you want to place before Allah a manifest proof of your guilt? (4:144).

O You who are secure and committed [to Allah]! Do not take [political] Jews and Christians as your allies, [for] they are but allies of one another, and whoever of you allies himself with them becomes, indeed, one of them; behold, Allah does not guide such violators of justice (5:51).

With all this, [remember that] those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah's power presence] are allies of one another; and unless you act likewise [as allies of one another], oppression will reign on earth, and massive corruption (8:73).

And [as for] those committed [to Allah's worldly power presence], both men and women, they are champions of each other... (9:71).

You cannot find people who are [truly] committed to Allah and the Last Day and [at the same time] feel deep affection for anyone who contends against Allah and His Apostle, even if they are their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers... (58:22).

O You who are securely committed [to Allah's power presence]! Do not take My enemies — who are your enemies as well — for your authoritative superiors, showing them fondness even though they are bent on denying whatever truth has come to you, [and even though] they have driven the Apostle [Muhammad] and yourselves away, [only] because you are committed to Allah [and His earthly power], your Sustainer. If you have left [your homes] to strive in My cause, and

out of a longing for My goodly acceptance, [do not take them as your friendly allies], inclining toward them in secret affection, for I am fully aware of all that you may conceal as well as of all that you do openly. And any of you who does this has already drifted away from the right path (60:1).

This command for Muslim independence, and warning about the dangers of dealing with the *kāfirs*, has long been buried under the debris of historical expediencies or necessities. Now is not the time for Muslims to bury their heads in the sand and pretend that this theme is not central to the Qur’an. Let them step forward and declare to all, “Allah (ﷻ) has prohibited humans who are committed to Him and His cause from becoming allies with those who are not committed to His power presence in human affairs.” It is as simple as that. Any Muslim who defies this prohibition effectively joins the forces of *kufr*, and no customary rituals or exculpatory justifications will absolve them.

Allah (ﷻ) makes the matter so clear; He leaves no room for arguments. So what do the royals in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf have to say about their political and economic alliances with the network of contemporary *kufr* that extends its tentacles from Tel Aviv and Washington? Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman were created by the British imperialists in the first half of the last century. The six families that rule in these Muslim territories control more than one-third of the petroleum in the world; they steal Muslim wealth and deposit it in the financial institutions of the modern West — where it is used by the powers of *kufr* — all the while claiming to be custodians of Islam. And all too many Muslims believe them, ignoring Allah’s (ﷻ) warning that “...whoever [falls in with the *kāfir* alliance] becomes disconnected from Allah.”

The British-created House of Saud exemplifies this pattern. Their alliance with the *kāfirs* dates back to the 1930s, and has become a timed-honored tradition. The tribal leader Abdul Aziz ibn Saud finished his conquest of a swathe of former Ottoman lands

in 1932.⁴⁷ By 1933 the Standard Oil Company of California had gained concessions for £50,000 in gold as an advance against future oil royalties. US oil firms and their government have supported their Saudi allies ever since, and their support has been reciprocated. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), King Khālid allowed the US to store arms and ammunition on the sacred land of Arabia. Later, when the US Congress refused to authorize the Reagan administration funding of the right-wing Contra guerrillas in Nicaragua, CIA director Bill Casey went to see Bandar ibn Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to Washington, who wrote a personal check in the amount of \$1 million for the Contras, and promised another every month.⁴⁸ His generosity is less surprising bearing in mind the hundreds of millions of dollars that senior Saudi princes have made from kickbacks on contracts given to Western firms. The pickings are richest in the field of weapons procurement, where the Saudi allies of *kufir* have spent on a grand scale since *kāfir* prodding led to the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the early stages of the Iraqi-imposed war on Islamic Iran. One package awarded to British defense companies amounted to £43 billion (\$80 billion), the largest single arms deal ever.⁴⁹

The Saudis also played a key role in the Middle East under the Carter Doctrine by opening up the Holy Lands for the establishment of American military bases throughout the Peninsula and Gulf.⁵⁰ The ever-faithful Saudi rulers also helped the US government at that time by purchasing US weapons and military services, worth \$3.2 billion, between 1970 and 1979. By 1978 some 675 US military personnel and 10,000 civilian employees of US “defense” contractors were building military installations in the land of Muhammad (ﷺ). The Pentagon’s search for airfields, ports, barracks, and support facilities to host a US interventionist force in the region took two tracks. Publicly, the US faced the reluctance of the Saudis to be linked with the main Western power, also the main supporter of Israel. A more discreet approach was required, and Egypt, Oman, and Bahrain agreed to provide military facilities for US air and naval forces. But there is also a huge network of Western military bases and garrisons established throughout the Saudi kingdom.⁵¹

Saudi Arabia’s long and extended political and economic cooperation with its US master has rendered the rulers in that desert kingdom more relaxed in American company than in the company of Muslims. Yet the House of Saud does not even bother to consider the meanings of the *āyah* “...since he who does this [ally himself with the *kāfirs*] severs all relations with Allah...;” they apparently believe they have put the Muslims to sleep through the syndicate of *masjids* they own, finance, or sponsor. They are banking on the vast majority of Muslims not realizing that the Saudi rulers are hardly Muslims any longer, having joined forces with the *kāfirs* and so abandoning Allah (ﷻ) in the process. It is because Muslims have drifted so far from the spirit of these *āyāt* that the chieftains in Riyadh could become the heart of Operation Desert Storm, the US attack on Iraq in 1991, and think nothing of allowing more than 500,000 Western troops into Arabia, ostensibly to “protect” the Arabian royal families.⁵²

Whichever way we look at it, the Saudi subservience to American, and hence Israeli, interests is a prime demonstration of rulers with Muslim images who have crossed the line of fidelity to Allah (ﷻ) and joined their lot with the *fāsiqs* of the world. For this reason the Saudi rulers and all their like from Southeast Asia to Northwest Africa are severed from Allah (ﷻ): they have no liaison with Him; their faith and belief do not relate to Allah (ﷻ); they are not affiliated with Him; and their authority does not derive from Him. They are all expelled from Allah’s (ﷻ) company.

Because of their unconditional fealty, bond, and confidence in Allah (ﷻ), at the ideological and political levels as well as the personal and spiritual, it is inevitable that the lives of politically committed Muslims are threatened by the states, governments, and regimes of the *kāfirs*. At such times, and in such circumstances, Muslims are permitted to avert such threats by pretending to be with the worldly power as opposed to Allah’s (ﷻ) power. This pretense can only be expressed verbally; in his heart and mind, and in his actions, the Muslim remains faithful and dedicated to Allah (ﷻ). Such a dissimulation is called *taqīyah*; and this *āyah* is the basis for it in a Muslim’s life whenever he is faced with imminent death because

of his allegiance to Allah (ﷻ), “...unless it be to protect your lives against them [the *kāfirs*] in this way.” *Taqīyah* is an exception to the rule, for extreme circumstances, and must not be abused. No Muslim may plead *taqīyah* when his life is not threatened, or whenever he doubts that some negative consequence may follow the revelation of his allegiance to Allah (ﷻ). *Taqīyah* may not be extended to acting as the *kāfirs* are doing, in order to demonstrate that a Muslim is not of allegiance to Allah (ﷻ). It has been reported that Ibn ‘Abbās said, “*Taqīyah* is a function of speech and not a function of behavior.”⁵³ So if *taqīyah* is correctly used, simply to ensure a Muslim’s survival, it does not result in a military or political relationship or alliance between the Muslims and the *kāfirs*. No Muslim may justify his personal survival when he becomes actively involved in a system of *kufr* that is at war with Allah (ﷻ). No Muslim is permitted to be involved in such duplicity.

It has become commonplace for some Muslims to make a habit out of this exception and invoke *taqīyah* liberally and lightly. Allah’s (ﷻ) words address this cowardly aspect of human nature, “**But Allah warns you to beware of Him, for with Allah is all journeys’ end.**” If we committed Muslims are so emphatic about Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in our earthly lives, and if this issue parts us from the *kāfirs*, then we should also acknowledge that Allah’s (ﷻ) presence dominates our hearts and innermost thoughts. We cannot conceal anything from Allah (ﷻ); we may be able to conceal our true selves and our sincere convictions from mortals, but we cannot conceal these things from Allah (ﷻ). He knows what we are committed to, He knows how well we are committed, and He knows whether or not we are in mortal danger. So we should be aware of the immensity of the step we take in pretending we are not loyal to Allah (ﷻ), and should make sure we never do so unless it is absolutely necessary.

Say, “Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or bring it into the open, Allah knows it, for He knows all that is in the heavens and all that is on Earth; and Allah has power to determine anything” (3:29).

This whole concept of secret thought or intention that is deliberately restricted to times and circumstances of immediate and mortal danger must be kept within these strict parameters. It addresses, for example, occasions when there is a witch-hunt for individuals or a group of committed Muslims who stand for Allah's (ﷻ) power against those who have succeeded in temporarily usurping this power through military force and authoritarian institutions. Beyond the problem of those who abuse this concept by using it too freely and easily, there are also groups who have developed over time a type of esoteric or occult social shell on its basis. In some instances they build a social cohesiveness around a secret or mystical philosophy. The Agha Khanis, the Druze, and the 'Alawīs are examples of how a legitimate beginning turned into an improper end.⁵⁴ A similar process is underway today; the brutal and ruthless persecution of committed and dedicated Muslims by the diabolic power structures that dominate the Muslim world has forced Muslims who believe and stand for Allah's (ﷻ) power presence on earth to go underground and disguise their identity. Some groups of such Muslims, forced underground as a matter of *taqīyah*, are indeed being pushed into beliefs and actions that are unacceptable in Islam, and some may well evolve into arcane, esoteric, occult, and cryptic sects as a result of misinterpreting the Qur'anic discourse regarding the overall clash between *īmān* and *kufr*.

Mistranslations and misunderstandings of Qur'anic *āyāt* confuse and obfuscate the fact that Muslims are not permitted to replace Allah's (ﷻ) authority with any worldly authority. In particular, they are not allowed to become the loyal followers of secular and irreligious leaders who do not acknowledge the overriding power of Allah (ﷻ), or His scripture as the Book of reference for social values, economic policies, and political strategy. Beyond that Muslims are ordered by Allah (ﷻ) to tender right dealings for right dealings when it comes to ordinary people, and to treat them according to the high behavioral standards of Islam.

Some people, including many officials and academics, Muslim and non-Muslim, confuse these issues. Since September 11, 2001, there has been a far-reaching campaign against the Muslims that

seeks to portray them in the most negative image possible. If these mouthpieces of Western secular orthodoxies took the time to investigate the facts they would — if they were fair — discover the truth. Muslims are united in international opposition to the pseudo-gods in this world who think they can rule without anticipated accountability to a higher authority; the Muslims will take the lead in fighting against those who think they can exercise the power of their militaries against Muslims and other oppressed peoples in the world without fearing and respecting the corrective power of Allah (ﷻ).

On the Day when every human being will find himself faced with all the good he has done, and with all the evil he has done, [many a one] will wish that there were a long span of time between himself and that [Day] (3:30).

This set of *āyāt* guides the committed Muslims through the issue of political allegiance with Allah (ﷻ) in this world. Then our attention is drawn to the next world and life. The first step is when we assemble on that momentous Day. Nothing is going to be purged from our records; everything will be presented on that defining Day. All the good and evil that were attached to man's behavior will surface. And if iniquity and immorality are preponderant, the judged individual will wish he was light years away from that moment of truth. As people now have the opportunity to read these words and consider them, it is the right time to do something about that impending Day, **“Hence Allah warns you to beware of Him; but Allah is most compassionate toward His subjects.”**

This whole lesson suggests that some Muslims, during those years of struggle in Madinah, felt comfortable in the political or ideological circles of the non-Muslims. The *āyāt* make it clear that political and ideological affinities are banned between Muslims who are dedicated to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ), and *kāfirs* who are dedicated to worldly economic interests and their power structure. No other consideration should be allowed to blur this well-established demarcation — be it history, tradition, relatives,

friends, associates, or agents. The Yahūd of Madinah and the *mushriks* of Makkah never qualified for Islamic fellowship; how could they when they were responsible for spilling Muslim blood? So, how is it possible today for any honest reading of the Qur'an to countenance Muslims making political deals with the Yahūd of the Holy Land and the *mushriks* of America? One day, *inshā'allāh*, the Muslims whose loyalties are sincere and undivided will triumph over the equivocators, but for the time being it appears that the latter can enjoy the fruits of their duplicity, at least in this world if not in the next.

The object lessons given in this section of *Sūrah* Āl 'Imrān can be interpreted in a number of ways. The first is that Muslims should never feel comfortable and familiar with political *kāfirs*; they cannot have confidence in them, and the public affairs of Muslims may not pass on from Muslim officials to *kāfir* officials, or Muslims who effectively work for the *kāfirs*. This is the only way of viewing Muslim officials today who are brazenly violating Allah's (ﷻ) commands. These "Muslim" functionaries are agents of the *kāfirs*: they provide the enemies of Allah (ﷻ) with whatever information there is to have about the Islamic movement, and they join every anti-Islamic alliance that is established.

These *āyāt* also illuminate another episode from Islamic prophetic history, the affair of Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'aḥ, reported by Imam Muslim, Imam al-Bukhārī, and other sources. This incident sheds light on the issue of alliance and coordination with the enemies of Allah (ﷻ). Ḥāṭib, a Muslim in Madinah, wrote a letter to Quraysh in Makkah informing them that the Prophet (ﷺ) was preparing a military force that would advance on Makkah to liberate it. This whole military campaign had been prepared in secret, so that the Muslims would have the element of surprise on their side. In the aftermath of Qurayshī violation of the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, the Prophet (ﷺ) had decided to move on Makkah and liberate it. He had hoped that a sudden assault on Quraysh would force their hand, that the war would inflict minimal casualties, and that Quraysh would sue for peace. Ḥāṭib wrote all this information down and presented the letter to a young woman who hid it in her

hair; the woman was to deliver the letter to Quraysh in Makkah. Allah (ﷻ) divulged the plan to His Prophet (ﷺ), who sent ‘Alī, al-Zubayr, and al-Miqdād to intercept the courier. He told them to proceed to a place called Rawḍaḥ Khakh, where they would find the woman, and to retrieve Ḥāṭib’s letter.

Once all that was done, the Prophet (ﷺ) summoned Ḥāṭib to query him about his actions. Ḥāṭib said, “O Messenger of Allah, don’t rush to judgment! I used to be a cooperator with Quraysh. I did not have great rank among them. The Muhājirūn who left Makkah had clans who would protect the families and interests they left behind in Makkah. I thought that, having no clan to protect my family and interests in Makkah, I could at least have some influence with Quraysh. I did not do this to denounce my *dīn*, nor am I satisfied with *kufr* after having yielded to Allah (ﷻ).” The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*Most definitely he has stated the truth.*” ‘Umar asked the Prophet’s (ﷺ) permission to put Ḥāṭib to death, but the Prophet (ﷺ) did not permit that.⁵⁵ Some interpreters of the Qur’an have said that it was after this incident that Allah (ﷻ) revealed the *āyah*,

**O you who are secure in your commitment [to Allah]!
Do not take My enemies — who are your enemies as well — as your allies, showing them affection even though they are bent on denying whatever truth has come to you, [and even though] they have driven the Messenger and yourselves away, [only] because you are committed to Allah, your Sustainer! (60:1).**

Whatever the case may be, there is an emphatic rejection of alliances and similar relationships with *kāfirs*.

That does not mean that Muslims are banned from entering into political arrangements with other blocs of people, provided that they do not compromise their Islamic priorities and principles, and as long as they are not junior partners in whatever political arrangement is worked out. The Prophet (ﷺ) himself had an arrangement with the non-Muslim power center of Khuzā‘ah in his struggle against Quraysh.

Nor does this *āyah* bar Muslims from being on good relations with other non-Muslims, so long as they do not oppose the Muslim political order. This should not, and does not, mean that Muslims are endorsing other people’s *kufr*. Muslims may also exchange ideas and feelings with other non-Muslims, as long as this does not violate the Muslims’ priorities or the Muslim public security. Thus Allah (ﷻ) says,

As for such [of the non-Muslims] as do not fight against you on account of [your] *dīn*, nor drive you forth from your homelands, Allah does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave toward them with full equity: for, verily, Allah loves those who act equitably. Allah only forbids you to turn in alliance toward such as fight against you because of [your] *dīn*, and expel you from your homelands, or aid [others] in forcing you out [of your country]; and as for those [from among you] who turn toward them in alliance, it is they, they who are truly [and] offensively unjust! (60:8–9).

The belligerent and warring *kāfirs* who have caused mass displacements of Muslims and have set up an international system that condones massacres and wars against Muslims, and who steal their homelands and resources, are the ones who must never be taken as allies of Muslims. The US apart, the two parties who immediately come to mind in this context are Israel, which occupies the Holy Land by force, and India, which has occupied Kashmir for six decades. In light of these *āyāt*, it is clear that Muslims and their governments are routinely defying the Qur’an by the relationships they have with modern powers of *kufr* — be they military, political or diplomatic — and with the West-dominated international institutions by which the powers of *kufr* exercise their power.

The second lesson from these *āyāt* is that Muslims may not seek the service of *kāfirs* in their wars. At the level of warfare, Allah (ﷻ) is telling the Muslims they must not trust the *kāfirs*. They may be trusted at other levels, but not when it comes to hot wars and

hostilities. During the Battle of Badr, a man following the Prophet (ﷺ) suggested that the Muslims should try to obtain the support of other *kāfirs* against Quraysh. The Prophet's (ﷺ) answer was, "Return; I will not solicit assistance from *mushriks*."⁵⁶

There are some scholarly opinions from the early days of fiqh that qualify this issue, saying that *kāfirs* may be enrolled, or their services utilized, provided they are individuals and their positions at the war front do not jeopardize the Muslims' war effort. They cite the incident on the day of the Battle of Ḥunayn, when the Prophet (ﷺ) turned to Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah for help in the war against Hawāzin. The non-Muslim power factions of Khuzā'ah also cooperated with the Prophet (ﷺ) during the year Makkah was liberated. Other references are made to Quzmān (a known *munāfiq*), who went out with the warriors of Islam during the battle of Uḥud.⁵⁷

The third lesson derived from these *āyāt* encapsulates the validation of the tactic of *taqīyah* to preserve life; the inviolability of women and personal property; and the moral duty of repulsing impending mortal danger from the *kāfirs*. This issue needs careful understanding. There may be unbearable circumstances and an anti-Islamic frenzy that force Muslims not only to conceal their allegiance to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ), but also to conceal their faith in Islam, on pain of torture or death. But in this case, Muslims are instructed to leave such territories of tyrannical regimes, by physically moving to some other part of the world, where it is possible for them to live openly by their convictions and principles. But if the Muslims happen to be disenfranchised and weak, such as children, women and the elderly, they are allowed to stay where they are and to pretend to be non-Muslims if that is what it takes to protect their lives. However, they must always seek alternatives if at all possible. This is understood from Allah's (ﷻ) words when He states,

Behold, those whom the angels gather in death while they are still sinning against themselves, [the angels] will ask, "What was wrong with you?" They will answer, "We were too weak on earth." [The angels]

will say, “Was, then, Allah’s earth not wide enough for you to forsake the domain of *kufr*?”

For such, then, the goal is Hell — and how evil a journey’s end! But excepted shall be the truly helpless — be they men or women or children — who cannot bring forth any strength and have not been shown the right way; as for them, Allah may well efface their sin, for Allah is indeed the Absolver of sins, Much-Forgiving (4:97–99).

Pretending to agree with *kāfirs* in such dire conditions is divinely permitted. However, if a person chooses to oppose the *kāfirs*, and declare his allegiance to Allah (ﷻ), and is then killed by the *kāfirs*, he is considered a *shahīd* (martyr).

The evidence for the above is found in an incident involving the false prophet, Musaylamaḥ al-Kadhḥāb (Musaylamaḥ the Liar). It is reported that he captured two of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) companions. He asked one of them, “Do you testify that Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger?” He replied, “Yes.” Then Musaylamaḥ asked, “Do you testify that I am Allah’s Messenger?” He said, “Yes.” And Musaylamaḥ let him go. Musaylamaḥ then called on the second companion, and asked him, “Do you testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (ﷻ)?” He said, “Yes.” Musaylamaḥ then asked him, “Do you testify that I am the Messenger of Allah?” He said, “I am deaf.” This was repeated three times, after which Musaylamaḥ had him beheaded. The details of this incident reached the Prophet (ﷺ), who said, “*The deceased has passed on with his truth and trust [in Allah]. His standard was commendable. As for the other, he accepted Allah’s license with which no one can argue.*”⁵⁸

The question then arises as to whether a Muslim should leave the lands of the *kāfirs* if he fears for his wealth. Some ‘alims have said that he should, citing the *āyah*, “**And let not your own hands throw you into destruction**” (2:195). In this context, another hadith is often quoted, “*And whoever dies in defense of his wealth is a shahīd.*”⁵⁹ Others say that in these circumstances, it is not necessary to leave such a place because wealth is a worldly issue that comes

and goes, and life itself is not threatened. But once a person fears for his life, or the life of his loved ones, or the honor of his women-folk, then leaving such places is the obvious thing to do.

This whole lesson ends on a very important note. It makes the whole issue of allegiance as clear and distinguishable as night and day. After the following *āyah*, no one should have any doubts on the matter,

Say [O Prophet], “If you love Allah, follow me, [and] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins; for Allah is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Grace.” Say, “Pay heed unto Allah and the Apostle.” But if you turn away, then Allah does not favor those who deny Him (3:31–32).

Muslims should pause for a moment at this *āyah*. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is instructed to say to us, “**If you love Allah, then follow me.**” Loving Allah (ﷻ) is defined by following Muhammad (ﷺ), not by poetic words or spiritual ecstasy. The love of Allah (ﷻ) is expressed in the real-life obedience and emulation of the Prophet (ﷺ) himself. Muhammad (ﷺ) left us an example and a method in the military, ideological, and strategic levels, demanding effort and commitment. If we really love Allah (ﷻ), we have to follow the example and tread in the footsteps of the Prophet (ﷺ), so that we can accomplish what he accomplished. And if we cannot achieve that, we are expected at least to try. This *imān* cannot be expressed and fulfilled by words alone, or by intense feelings, or by the performance of rituals. What is required is a collective determination and effort to follow and emulate the Prophet (ﷺ) in everything he did. Anyone who claims to love Allah (ﷻ), yet has no affiliation with the conduct of the Prophet (ﷺ), cannot sustain a genuine and meaningful relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

In what circumstances was this *āyah* revealed? One report states that some people came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, “O Muhammad! We love our Lord!” and it was in response to this that Allah (ﷻ) revealed, “**Say [O Prophet], ‘If you love Allah, follow**

me, [and] Allah will love you...” Another report states that when the Christian delegation of Najrān came to the Prophet (ﷺ), suggesting that their impression of Jesus (ﷺ) was their way of expressing their love for God, Allah (ﷻ) disclosed, **“If you love God, follow me, [and] God will love you...”** Yet another report cites the Jews’ claim that **“We are God’s children and His beloved ones...”** in response to which Allah (ﷻ) replied, **“If you love God, follow me, [and] God will love you...”** Of course, most of the Jews turned down this offer.⁶⁰ Whatever the specific incident was, the *āyah* is general and includes all people. It becomes an open invitation to all people to show their love of Allah (ﷻ) by following and obeying His final Apostle (ﷺ). Notably, this *āyah* came in the context of Allah (ﷻ) explaining the issue of authority, alliance, and allegiance. The best way to avoid the pitfalls here is to admire boundlessly and abide by whatever the Prophet (ﷺ) advises us to do.

It is reported that when *āyah* 3:31 was revealed, ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, the head of the *munāfiqs*, said, “Muhammad is equating obedience to him with obedience to Allah! He is demanding that we love him as the Christians love Jesus!” And the words came down, **“Say, ‘Pay heed unto Allah and the Apostle...’”**⁶¹ This is how diseased hearts and sick minds try to confuse issues. People are called upon by these manifest words to prove their love for Allah (ﷻ) by living up to and emulating the human model of that love: Muhammad (ﷺ). Only a *munāfiq* could try to twist and deform the clear meanings of these words. All people are exhorted by this *āyah* to consider Muhammad (ﷺ) — his standing, objectives, and methods are clear for all to see. And if some sects, religions, creeds, and beliefs have a problem with viewing the excellent character of Muhammad (ﷺ) as the quintessential illustration of the Qur’an and as the open door to Allah’s (ﷻ) love, then it is they who have to come to terms with being distant from God. It is not our desire to castigate sincere adherents of previous scripture; however we would feel better if they were able to acknowledge the merits and moral excellence of this final and perfect Prophet of Allah (ﷺ).

One reflection on this *āyah* is what was said many generations ago by Sahl ibn ‘Abdillāh, “The clear sign that you love

Allah (ﷻ) is to love the Qur'an. And the clear sign that you love the Qur'an is to love the Prophet (ﷺ). And the clear sign that you love the Prophet (ﷺ) is to love what he did (the Sunnah). And the clear sign that you love Allah (ﷻ), the Qur'an, the Prophet (ﷺ), and the Sunnah, is that you love the coming life (*ākhirah*). And the mark of loving the *ākhirah* is to love yourself, and the mark of that is to intensely dislike the *dunyā* (this worldly life). And the proof of that is that you only take of it what you need to get to where you are going.”⁶²

What is so obvious here but so obscure to the contemporary Muslim mind is the arrangement of this *āyah*. The love of Allah (ﷻ) is embedded in a lesson that focuses on allegiance to, alliance with, and the authority of Allah (ﷻ). And who could express these traits better than Muhammad (ﷺ)? So why do we not take up mental residence in this guiding Book? How come some Muslims are arrogant and judgemental, claiming they love Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) more than others, while their actions lag behind and they are no more than faint images, if even that, of what Muhammad (ﷺ) stood for and was willing to die for?

Christianity and the Misunderstood Nature of 'Īsā (ﷺ)

- (3:33) Behold, Allah raised Adam, and Noah, and the House of Abraham, and the House of 'Imrān above all the worlds [mankind],
- (3:34) In one line of descent [they all came one after another] and Allah was All-Hearing, All-Knowing.
- (3:35) When a woman of [the House of] 'Imrān prayed, “O my Sustainer! Behold, unto You do I vow [the child] that is in my womb, to be devoted to Your service. Accept it, then, from me: verily, You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing!”
- (3:36) But when she had given birth to the child, she said, “O my Sustainer! Behold, I have given birth to a female” — the while Allah had been fully aware of what she would give

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ
 ٣٣ ﴿ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾ ٣٤ إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ
 عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ
 الْعَلِيمُ ٣٥ فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
 وَضَعَتْ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيدُهَا بِلَكَ
 وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ٣٦ فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا
 نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَلَهَا زَكْرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا
 رِزْقًا قَالَ يَمْرِئُمُ أَنَّىٰ لَكَ هَذَا قَالَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ
 يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ٣٧ هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ
 لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ٣٨ فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلَأِكَةُ وَهُوَ
 قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيحْيَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ
 وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ٣٩ قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي
 غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا
 يَشَاءُ ٤٠ قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ
 ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَّا رَمْزًا وَادْكُرْ رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَرِ

﴿٤١﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَأِكَةُ يَمْرِيمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَأَصْطَفَاكِ
 عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يَمْرِيمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَأَسْجُدِي وَأَرْكَعِي مَعَ
 الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ
 إِذْ يَقُولُ أَقْلَمُهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ
 يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَأِكَةُ يَمْرِيمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ
 مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ
 الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ
 ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ
 يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَيَعْلَمُ
 الْكِنَبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي
 إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَاتٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ
 الطَّيْرِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَاَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ
 الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ
 وَمَا تَدْخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
 ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَأُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ

الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ
 وَأَطِيعُوا ٥٠ إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ
 ٥١ ﴿ فَمَا أَحْسَ عَيْسَىٰ مِنْهُمْ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ
 قَالَ الْخَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّآ
 مُسْلِمُونَ ٥٢ رَبَّنَا ءَامَنَّا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ
 فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ٥٣ وَمَكْرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ
 خَيْرُ الْمَكْرِينَ ٥٤ إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِيَعِيسَىٰ إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ
 وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا
 كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ٥٥ فَمَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَاعَذِّبْهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي
 الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ٥٦ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
 وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمُ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ٥٧
 ذَلِكَ نَتَلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ ٥٨ إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ
 عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ ءَادَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ٥٩
 الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ٦٠ فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا

جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ
وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكٰذِبِينَ
﴿٦١﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قُلْ يَتَاهَل
الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ
وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِء شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

birth to, and [fully aware] that no male child [she might have hoped for] could ever have been like this female — “and I have named her Maryam. And, verily, I seek Your protection for her and her offspring against Satan, the accursed.”

- (3:37) And thereupon her Sustainer accepted the girl-child with goodly acceptance, and caused her to grow up in goodly growth, and placed her in the care of Zakariyā. Whenever Zakariyā visited her in the sanctuary, he found her provided with food. He would ask, “O Maryam, how did this come to you?” She would answer, “It is from Allah; behold, Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning.”
- (3:38) In that self-same place, Zakariyā prayed unto his Sustainer, saying, “O my Sustainer! Bestow upon me [too], out of Your grace, the gift of goodly offspring; for You, indeed, hear all prayer.”

- (3:39) Thereupon, as he stood praying in the sanctuary, the angels called out to him, “Allah sends you the glad tiding of [the birth of] John, who shall confirm the truth of a word from Allah, and [shall be] outstanding among men, and utterly chaste, and a prophet from among the righteous.”
- (3:40) [Zakariyā] exclaimed, “O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when old age has already overtaken me, and my wife is barren?” Answered [the angel], “Thus it is: Allah does what He wills.”
- (3:41) [Zakariyā] prayed, “O my Sustainer! Appoint a sign for me!” Said [the angel], “Your sign shall be that for three days you will not speak to men other than by gestures. And remember your Sustainer unceasingly, and extol His limitless glory by night and by day.”
- (3:42) And lo! The angels said, “O Maryam! Behold, Allah has privileged you and made you pure, and raised you above all the women of the world.
- (3:43) O Maryam! Remain you truly devout to your Sustainer, and prostrate yourself, and bow down with those who bow down [before Him].”
- (3:44) This account of something that was beyond the reach of your perception We [now] reveal to you [O Prophet]; for you were not with them when they drew lots [to decide] which of them should be Maryam’s guardian, and you were not with them when they contended [about it] with one another.
- (3:45) Lo! The angels said, “O Maryam! Behold, Allah sends you the glad tiding, through a word from Him, [of a son] who shall become known as the Christ, Jesus, son of Maryam, held in great honor in this world and in the life to come, and [shall be] of those who are drawn near to Allah.
- (3:46) “And he shall speak to men in his cradle, and as a grown man, and shall be of the righteous.”
- (3:47) Said she, “O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?” [The angel] answered,

- “Thus it is. Allah creates what He wills — when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, ‘Be,’ and it is.
- (3:48) “And He will impart to your son revelation, and wisdom, and the Torah, and the Gospel,
 - (3:49) “And [will make him] an apostle unto the Children of Israel,” [saying to his people], “I have come unto you with a message from your Sustainer. I shall create for you out of clay, as it were, the shape of a bird, and then breathe into it, so that it might become a bird by Allah’s leave; and I shall heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life by Allah’s leave; and I shall let you know what you may eat and what you should store up in your houses. Behold, in all this there is indeed a message for you if you are truly committed.
 - (3:50) “And I have come to confirm the truth of whatever there still remains of the Torah and to make lawful unto you some of the things that were forbidden to you. And I have come to you with a sign from your Sustainer; remain, then, conscious of Allah, and pay heed unto me.
 - (3:51) “Verily, Allah is my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer; so conform unto Him [alone]: this is a straight way.”
 - (3:52) And when Jesus became aware of their refusal to acknowledge the truth, he asked, “Who will be my helpers in Allah’s cause?” The white-garbed ones replied, “We shall be [your] helpers [in the cause] of Allah! We are committed to Allah, and bear you witness that we have surrendered ourselves unto Him!
 - (3:53) “O our Sustainer! We believe in what You have bestowed from on high, and we follow this apostle; make us one, then, with all who bear witness [to the truth]!”
 - (3:54) And the deniers schemed [against Jesus], but Allah ruined their scheming: for Allah is above all schemers.
 - (3:55) Lo, Allah said, “O Jesus ! Verily, I shall cause you to die, and shall exalt you unto Me, and cleanse you of [the presence of] those who are bent on denying the truth, unto the Day of Resurrection. And I shall place those who fol-

low you [far] above those who deny the truth. In the end, unto Me you all must return, and I shall judge between you with regard to all on which you were wont to differ.

- (3:56) “And as for those who are bent on denying the truth, I shall cause them to suffer a suffering severe in this world and in the life to come, and they shall have none to support them;
- (3:57) “Whereas unto those who are committed and do good works He will grant their reward in full; for Allah does not love offenders.”
- (3:58) This message do We convey to you [O Prophet], this tiding full of wisdom.
- (3:59) Verily, in the sight of Allah, the nature of Jesus is as the nature of Adam, whom He created out of dust and then said to him, “Be,” and he is.
- (3:60) [This is] the truth from your Sustainer; be not, then, among the doubters!
- (3:61) And if anyone should argue with you about this [truth] after all the knowledge that has come to you, say, “Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves; and then let us pray [together] humbly and ardently, and let us invoke Allah’s curse upon those [of us] who are telling a lie.”
- (3:62) Behold, this is indeed the truth of the matter, and there is no deity/authority whatever save Allah; and verily, Allah — He alone — is Almighty, Truly Wise.
- (3:63) And if they turn away [from this truth], behold, Allah has full knowledge of the spreaders of corruption.
- (3:64) Say, “O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall conform unto none but Allah, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to any beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside Allah.” And if they turn away, then say, “Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves to Him” (Āl ‘Imrān:33–64).

This long discourse brings into focus some of the theological issues that distinguish Muslims from Christians. It is effectively a report on the debate that took place between Allah's last Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), and the Christian delegation that came from Najrān. The correct information about the birth of Maryam (the virgin Mary — ﷺ), the birth of 'Īsá (Jesus — ﷺ), and the birth of Yaḥyá (John — ﷺ), and other details were provided by Allah (ﷻ) to the Prophet (ﷺ), so that he could respond to the erroneous versions of this history and provide certitude to those Christians who for over 600 years were still uncertain about these issues. Thus when Muhammad (ﷺ) entered into a discussion with the Christian delegation, he did so confident of his knowledge of their own history. When he told the Christians that Jesus (ﷺ) is **“God's word to Mary”** and **“of God's spirit”** he did so with full knowledge and authority.

This section of just over thirty *āyāt* also consolidates a major theme of *Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: tawḥīd*. Mankind is not permitted to dilute or fudge the fact of the singularity of Allah (ﷻ), the One God. He has no son or other human issue that diminishes the integrity of His overwhelming divinity and ever-present control of all affairs. The record is set absolutely straight: neither was Jesus (ﷺ) God's son, nor were any of his other kin. He was not a deity or even a semi-deity. The Qur'an makes it clear that Jesus (ﷺ) was near to Allah (ﷻ), as all Prophets and Messengers (ﷺ) are near to Him, but this did not amount to a genetic relationship of any kind.

Even a cursory understanding of these *āyāt* makes it impossible for anyone to believe that Jesus (ﷺ), or anyone else for that matter, is a son of God, or God in the flesh, or a third part of “God.” In plain language is revealed the truth about the birth of Mary (ﷺ), and the birth of Jesus (ﷺ), along with a short history of his mission. The Qur'an recounts that Jesus (ﷺ) came from a family of Prophets (ﷺ), and that miracles were part of his mission. Anyone who follows these words of Allah (ﷻ) about Jesus (ﷺ) must realize that he was no more than human, a mortal man who walked the earth. There is nothing that defies reason and common sense when Allah (ﷻ) speaks about Jesus (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) sums up the ques-

tion of his origin, which has caused so much confusion among Christians, as simply as it could be, “**Verily, as concerns Allah, the nature of Jesus is as the nature of Adam, whom He created out of soil and then said to him, “Be” — and he is.**”

Another important theme in this discourse is the generic human relationship with Allah (ﷻ) throughout time. This relationship is characterized by yielding to Allah (ﷻ) on matters outlined by scripture and hard-wired in human nature. At a critical juncture in his mission, Jesus (ﷺ) appealed to this human element when he realized that the prevailing social order was forsaking him. As he discerned that “mainstream” society wanted to side with “human power” rather than “God’s power” on earth, he asked those around him who would step forth and support him.

And when Jesus became aware of their refusal to affirm the truth [of Allah’s power presence on earth] he asked, “Who will be my assistants in Allah’s cause?” The white-clad ones [the *disciples*] replied, “We shall be [your] assistants [in the cause] of Allah! We are committed to Allah and bear you witness that we have submitted ourselves unto Him. O our Sustainer! We pledge ourselves to what You have bestowed from on high, and we follow this messenger; make us one, then, with all who testify [to the truth]!” (3:52–53).

The *āyāt* indicate that when things became difficult, these people, whose life stories are being highlighted — Mary, Jesus, Zakarīyā, John (ﷺ), and the disciples of Jesus (ﷺ) — turned to Allah (ﷻ). This should teach us that when society and its norms turn against us we have only One God to turn to, and He is Allah (ﷻ).

This extended lesson is meant to teach the people of scripture about the fact that God is one. And if need be, we who yield to Allah (ﷻ), the One God, are willing to enter into a common invocation with Allah (ﷻ) in which all of us, Muslims and Christians, ask Him fervently to condemn those who are lying about God’s oneness. This is what is referred to as the *mubāhalaḥ*. Then Allah’s (ﷻ)

last Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), was told from on high to issue an eternal challenge to the people of scripture, Christians in particular,

Say, “O followers of earlier scripture! Come to that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall conform unto none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe divinity to none beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside Allah.” And if they turn away, then say, “Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves to Him” (3:64).

This all-embracing challenge should be enough to put an end to the variety of arguments that have long polarized the various peoples of scripture, and will continue to polarize them unless they come to grips with these plain and simple narratives that are open to each and all in this Book of Truth. More detailed information about the life of Jesus (ﷺ), particularly his birth, is to be found in *Sūrah Maryam*, the 19th *sūrah* of the Qur’an.

All Prophets Are Part of One Historical Continuum

The narrative begins by tightly binding those human beings, who throughout the course of divine missionary activity were selected by Allah (ﷻ) to communicate Allah’s (ﷻ) singular message, into the only true “religion” that has been around since the beginning of human history. These favored human beings were drawn from an assortment of human conditions and societies. The unfailing words of the Qur’an indicate they were of a related line of descent. This does not mean they all belonged to the same ethnic, racial, or national stock, although almost all people, regardless of their collective character and fine features, are descended from Ādam via Nūḥ (ﷺ). What they all have in common is the fact that Allah (ﷻ) chose them from a pool of hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of others who are equally human and as earthborn as they are. The relationship here is not a blood relationship as much as it is a “responsibility relationship.” They all were connect-

ed to each other by the nature of the God-given task they had been entrusted with,

Behold, Allah singled out Adam, and Noah, and the House of Abraham, and the House of ‘Imrān above all mankind, in one line of affinity. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (3:33–34).

Here Allah (ﷻ) mentions two prophets by name: Adam and Noah (ﷺ). He also mentions two relationships by name: the lines to Abraham (ﷺ) and ‘Imrān. Obviously Allah’s (ﷻ) choice of two individuals is meaningful; and letting us know their names is also significant. Thus Abraham (ﷺ) and ‘Imrān were chosen by Allah (ﷻ) in their own persons and in their family ties. But this family linkage is qualified by the earlier *āyah* in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, which states clearly that the basis for inheriting the responsibility of prophethood and grace is not a genetic or racial one. Rather it is an inheritance of heavenly-inspired responsibilities and God-guided initiatives,

And [remember this]: when his Sustainer tried Abraham by [His] commandments and the latter fulfilled them, He said, “Behold, I shall make you a leader of men.” Abraham asked, “And [will You make leaders] of my offspring as well?” [Allah] answered, “My covenant does not embrace the violators of justice” (2:124).

Some sources report that Āl ‘Imrān were the descendants of Āl Ibrāhīm. This would mean that Āl ‘Imrān, in a sense, are very special. And it serves as an introduction to spelling out the facts about Maryam and Jesus (ﷺ). The point here is that the miraculous birth of Mary and the immaculate birth of Jesus (ﷺ) came amidst a background of pristine family lineage. But before we look at the next *āyah* a word is due concerning Adam and Noah (ﷺ).

Ādam and Ḥawwā’ (ﷺ) — Adam and Eve (ﷺ) — share the unique honor of dwelling in heaven before living on earth. The

āyāt of the previous *sūrah* explain how Adam and Eve (ﷺ) fell into temptation (*āyah* 2:35). Allah (ﷻ) then said to them,

We did say, “Down with you all from this [state]. There shall, nonetheless, most certainly come to you guidance from Me: and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they feel grief” (2:38).

Upon landing on Earth, Adam (ﷺ) tried to atone for his disobedience. Allah (ﷻ) accepted his expiation, **“Thereafter, [however], his Sustainer privileged him [because of His grace], and accepted his repentance, and conferred His guidance upon him” (20:122).**

It is understood that Adam (ﷺ) became a messenger unto his progeny, and he is considered the first messenger (apostle). His status as a messenger is indicated in the two *āyāt* above, where Allah (ﷻ) says **“there shall, nonetheless, most certainly come to you guidance from Me”** and **“[Allah] conferred His guidance upon him [Adam].”** It seems reasonable that mankind would need someone to show them the way as they began their earthly presence; and who could be more apt to do that than Adam (ﷺ)? For that reason most Muslim scholars are in agreement that Adam (ﷺ) was a prophet and a messenger of Allah (ﷻ).

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī reports that Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) said,

*I am the luminary of Ādam’s descendants on the Day of Resurrection, and I say this with no vainglory. And in my hand is the banner of appreciation, with no vainglory. There is no prophet on that Day from Ādam on down, except that he is located under my banner. I am the first that Earth trembles for, and I also say this with no vainglory.”*⁶³

The creation of Adam (ﷺ) is reviewed nine times in the Qur’an. Contrary to notions of “evolution,” these *āyāt* indicate that Adam (ﷺ) was the first human being to have made a “transition” from heaven to Earth. There is nothing in the Qur’an that suggests any indication of “race” or “gender” when Adam (ﷺ) is mentioned.

Similarly, there is nothing anywhere in the Qur’an that lends any credence to notions of “racial” or “gender” superiority.⁶⁴

Noah (ﷺ) is the other “regenerator” of humanity. He had to start all over again when his opponents were washed away by the deluge that swept the lands; only those who accepted the truth from Noah (ﷺ) and mounted his ship were rescued to settle back on land after the waters had receded. Noah’s (ﷺ) struggle with his people is mentioned in six *sūrah*s. Allah (ﷻ) recounts His admonition, **“Behold, We sent Nūḥ to his people, [saying], ‘Warn your people before grievous suffering befalls them!’” (71:1).** This was at a time when his society had introduced five false gods into their lives, **“...they said [to their followers], ‘Do not ever abandon your gods; abandon neither Wadd nor Suwā’, and neither Yaghūth nor Ya’ūq nor Nasr!’” (71:23).**

A fairly detailed account of Noah’s (ﷺ) mission can be reconstructed from these six *sūrah*s. It can be summarized as follows,

1. Noah (ﷺ) tried his best to establish the validity of his message and mission.
2. he insisted on getting his message across to his people with every means at his disposal.
3. Noah’s (ﷺ) society distanced itself from him almost in proportion to his overtures — every time he took a step toward them they took a step away from him. This defiant society also mocked and abused his followers.
4. like other societies that defied Allah (ﷻ), they preferred their material gods to the transcendental deity.
5. Noah’s (ﷺ) opponents did not expect anything from him as he was a commoner among them; and they told him to bring on the torment of which he had been warning them.
6. Noah (ﷺ) complained to Allah (ﷻ) that the social powers were determined never to accept his message.
7. Allah (ﷻ) advised Noah (ﷺ) that the stand-off with his adversaries had reached the point of no return. This defining moment came after many generations of repulsion.
8. Noah (ﷺ) prayed to Allah (ﷻ), **“O my Sustainer! Leave not on earth any of those who deny [Your power presence]. For,**

behold, if You do leave them, they will [always try to] misdirect those who adhere to You, and will give birth to nothing but wickedness and stubborn ingratitude” (71:26–27).

9. Allah (ﷻ) told Noah (ﷺ) to build an ark in preparation for a deluge that will wash the Earth of *kufṛ* in the flesh.
10. When his people saw what he was doing, they intensified their derision and contempt. They made fun of Noah (ﷺ) up until the last moments before the impending divine response to their arrogance.
11. Allah (ﷻ) commanded Noah (ﷺ) to carry within his ark two pairs of every higher-ranking species, and to bring on board his family — except for those amongst them who opposed him, including his own son who would later drown — and those few who were divinely committed.
12. The Earth burst with flowing and gushing waters everywhere. The skies began pouring intensive rain. Noah (ﷺ) called his son to salvation as the water rose, but the son was obstinate and tried to save himself by climbing a high mountain. Allah’s (ﷻ) will took its course, the ark drifted with the currents, and Noah’s (ﷺ) son drowned in the rising tide of flood water.
13. Noah (ﷺ) expressed his fatherly feelings as the ark took one course and his son took another. Noah (ﷺ) wished that his son was on board and spared the consequences of dying in defiance of Allah (ﷻ). Noah (ﷺ) said, **“Indeed, my son is part of my family.”** Allah (ﷻ) immediately corrected him, telling him that this type of son is not a family intimate. He stepped outside of “the ties that bond” by his own action.
14. The scenario comes to an end with these evocative words, **“And the word was spoken, ‘O earth, swallow up your waters! And, O sky, cease [your rain]!’ And the waters sank into the earth, and the Will [of Allah] was done, and the ark came to rest on Mount Jūdīy. And the word was spoken, ‘Away with those folks who breach justice!’”** (11:44).
15. Noah’s (ﷺ) ordeal lasted for “50 years less than 1,000 years.” This is ascertained from the *āyah*, **“And, indeed, [in times long past] We sent forth Nūḥ to his people, and he dwelt**

among them a thousand years bar fifty; and then the floods overwhelmed them while they were still lost in their assaults on justice” (29:14).

16. It seems that the survivors of this downpour of water were Noah’s (ﷺ) descendants only. This is understood from Allah’s (ﷻ) words, “...and [We] caused his offspring to endure on earth” (37:77).

Note that from all this information about Adam and Noah (ﷺ) in the Qur’an, there are absolutely no hints of any racial or gender overtones. This is in stark contrast to the interpretations found in many Judeo-Christian books.

The Miraculous Births of Maryam and Yaḥyá (ﷺ)

Think back to when a woman of [the House of] ‘Imrān prayed [saying], “O my Sustainer! Behold, unto You do I vow [the child] that is in my womb, to be devoted to Your service. Accept it, then, from me: verily, You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing!” But when she had given birth to the child, she said, “O my Sustainer! Behold, I have given birth to a female” — the while Allah had been fully aware of what she would give birth to, and [fully aware] that no male child [she might have hoped for] could ever have been like this female — “and I have named her Maryam. And, verily, I seek Your protection for her and her offspring against Satan, the accursed. And thereupon her Sustainer accepted the girl-child with esteemed acceptance, to be nurtured with honor, and placed her in the care of Zakariyā. Whenever Zakariyā visited her in the sanctuary, he found her provided with food. He would ask, “O Maryam, how did you obtain this?” She would answer, “It is from Allah; behold, Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning” (3:35–37).

The first sentence in this narrative describes a woman who is making a vow to Allah (ﷻ). She turns to her lord with the most precious thing in her possession as a mother: the child in her womb. She wants this unborn child to be free. This may be an indirect indication of the condition of the times. The common people around may have lost their freedom; children and adults alike may have become playthings of the powers that be. When everyone is born into flagrant slavery or into disguised slavery, a mother with a free soul would want her child to have a free soul too.

She knew Allah (ﷻ) was hearing every word when she said, **“You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”** But then when she gave birth and the newborn was a girl, not a boy, she said what is quoted above in the *āyah*. She was disappointed; she expected the infant child would be a boy. In a power-ravaged world, a boy stands a better chance of achieving freedom and liberty. But Allah (ﷻ) knew exactly whom she had given birth to, and welcomed Maryam (ﷺ) in the best way. He took her to serve in His sanctuary at a young age. She was nurtured and nourished in a healthy and promising “religious” atmosphere. Zakarīyā (ﷺ), who is said to have been her maternal aunt’s husband, became her guardian. He, a descendant of Hārūn, the brother of Mūsā (ﷺ), also is said to have been in charge of the Jewish Temple.⁶⁵

So Mary (ﷺ) was in the most favorable of conditions, to such an extent that Allah (ﷻ) would provide her with food when she needed it. Zachariah (ﷺ) noticed this and asked her, **“O Mary! How did you get this? She would answer, ‘It is from Allah; behold, Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning.’”** Allah’s (ﷻ) provision of food “out of nowhere” may be regarded as foreshadowing the later miracles of providing life “out of nowhere” that were performed by John and Jesus (ﷺ).

At this point Zachariah’s (ﷺ) emotions were stirred; he felt a deep-seated desire to have a child. Human nature reverts easily to the instinct to reproduce and procreate. This is a part of human nature that is especially felt by couples who cannot, for whatever reason, have children; modern estimates are that approximately one in eight couples have difficulty conceiving. In Zachariah’s (ﷺ) case,

infertility was an established fact of life. He and his wife had been married for scores of years without having a child. Medically speaking, about one quarter of all normal women are sub-fertile by the age of 40. In this context Zachariah (ﷺ) and his wife were both well beyond the age of fertility. This being the case, when Zachariah (ﷺ) realized that Mary (ﷺ) was experiencing a miracle in the holy sanctuary, he himself was moved to pray for a miracle, saying, **“O my Sustainer! Bestow upon me [too], out of Your grace, the gift of a salutary offspring; for you, indeed, hear all prayer.”**

This *du‘ā* emerged from long years of being unable to become a parent. The Qur’an gives no clue about the reasons for Zachariah (ﷺ) and his wife not being able to conceive, but like those couples in a similar situation, it is probable that Zachariah (ﷺ) and his wife suffered many of the same problems of depression and guilt. Persistent infertility leads to grief, and the hopelessness of the situation can lead to obsession. Many of the feelings of grief are a reaction to the inability to give life. People who lose a parent or a friend are usually supported in their bereavement, but infertile couples often feel they have no one to turn to, no support to lean on. Friends who have children may appear embarrassed or unfeeling and they fail to appreciate the anger and frustration an infertile couple live with every day. These are the layers of feelings that accumulate over the years and dishearten the lives of childless husbands and wives. And it is in this context that Zachariah (ﷺ) turned to Allah (ﷻ), asking for a wholesome progeny. And what was Allah’s (ﷻ) response to this prayer?

Thereupon, as he stood praying in the sanctuary, the angels called out to him, **“Allah sends you the glad tid-ing of [the birth of] John, who shall confirm the truth of a word from Allah, and [shall be] outstanding among men, and utterly chaste, and a prophet from among the virtuous.”** [Zakariyā] exclaimed, **“O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when old age has already over-taken me, and my wife is barren?”** Answered [the angel], **“Thus it is: Allah does what He wills.”**

[Zakariyā] prayed, “O my Sustainer! Appoint a sign for me!” Said [the angel], “Your sign shall be that for three days you will not speak to men other than by gestures. And remember your Sustainer unceasingly, and extol His limitless glory by night and by day” (3:39–41).

Here the forgetful humans are being shown a miracle in the making: a marvelous event that demonstrates the supernatural power presence of Allah (ﷻ). Man is confined and habitualized by the hard facts of life. Of course there is a natural social law that regulates human life. This law tends to require humans to accept its consequences. Humans fall short when they forget or fail to realize that Allah (ﷻ), who devised these laws of nature and laws of humanity, is able to suspend them upon His decree. When these laws are “suspended,” as may occur from time to time, godless individuals or societies begin to interpret them as “freak occurrences” or simply to disbelieve them, regarding them as rumors or exaggeration.

But Zachariah’s (ﷺ) request was answered — he and his wife conceived against all normal, “reasonable” expectations. Allah’s (ﷻ) biological law was overruled by Allah’s (ﷻ) law of compassion and love. This shows that the mechanics of this world, even though they originate from Allah (ﷻ), can be overturned by His will and decree. When people find it difficult to believe such episodes, it is man on earth, people like you and me, who are failing to understand this fact. Internalizing this lesson should motivate every Muslim to relate more to Allah (ﷻ) by the codes of compassion than by the dehumanized laws of nature.

Zachariah (ﷺ) himself was surprised. His human pulse took over and his mind immediately asked, “O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when old age has already overwhelmed me, and my wife is barren?” The answer was simple but substantial, “Answered [the angel], ‘Thus it is: Allah does what He wills.’” When Allah (ﷻ) is involved, nothing is impossible. So what if Zachariah (ﷺ) and his wife never had children before? So what if they had spent decades attempting but failing to have their own begotten

child? So what if they were too old and physically incapable? Allah’s (ﷻ) will is absolute, uninhibited, and timely.

This truth was so profound that Zachariah (ﷺ) became anxious. “[He] addressed Allah, ‘O my Sustainer! Give me a sign...’” Here Allah (ﷻ) led Zachariah (ﷺ) to peace of mind. He instructed him to step out of his own habitual ways. Zachariah (ﷺ) was told to avoid speaking to people for three days; and if there was to be any communication, it should only be with Allah (ﷻ), **“Your sign shall be that for three days you will not speak to men other than by gestures. And recall your Sustainer continuously, and extol His timeless glory by night and by day.”**

These are straightforward words in the Qur’an that tell us the truth and bring out a clear lesson: Allah (ﷻ), while suspending the laws of nature, has the power to give life against all odds. But this evident lesson gets lost in the Judeo-Christian rendition. Only Luke names the parents of John (ﷺ) and tells the story of his birth.⁶⁶ Zachariah (ﷺ), his father, belonged to the Abijah section of the priesthood. He and his wife Elizabeth, also a descendant of Hārūn (ﷺ), were devout and scrupulous in their observance of the law, but they were childless and both were getting on in years.

Instead of bringing out the essence of Zachariah’s and John’s lives (ﷺ), the Judeo-Christian narrative turns descriptive and tribal or ethnic. The 24 families of the “sons of Aaron” were responsible, on a rotating schedule, for service in the Temple at Jerusalem. Within each family, two individuals were chosen by lot each day, one for the morning and one for the evening, to tend the brazier on the altar of incense in front of the Most Holy Place. On one occasion when Zachariah (ﷺ) was chosen for the great privilege of entering the sanctuary to burn incense there, the congregation remaining outside at prayer, he had a vision.

He saw an angel standing on the altar of incense and he was overcome with fright. He heard the angel speaking to him,

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will

be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke, 1:13–17, New International Version).

To this Zachariah (ﷺ) replied,

“How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” The angel answered, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.” (Luke, 1:18–20, New International Version).

When at last Zachariah (ﷺ) went out of the sanctuary to greet the people, he was unable to speak and could only make gestures. They perceived that he had received a vision within the sanctuary. In due time he returned home, and his wife Elizabeth conceived. Six months later, Mary (ﷺ), Elizabeth’s cousin and the future mother of Jesus (ﷺ), visited and stayed with them for about three months. According to the biblical account, it was not until after the birth of his child, his circumcision and naming, that Zachariah (ﷺ) received back his power of speech (the Qur’an indicates that this period actually lasted just three days). The biblical account also states that, at the ceremony of circumcision on the eighth day, their family and friends were going to name the child Zachariah after his father. Elizabeth, however, insisted on his being called *John*, despite protests that no one else in the family had that name. Finally they

appealed to Zachariah (ﷺ), who wrote on a tablet, “His name is John,” as the angel Gabriel (ﷺ) had instructed him. Luke records him as praising God in a poem that has since become part of the liturgy of the Christian Church. It is full of Old Testament phrases and reflects the messianic hopes of pious Jews of that time. It looks forward to the coming deliverance of the Lord Most High, whose forerunner was to become John — Prophet Zachariah’s (ﷺ) son. According to a later tradition, Zachariah (ﷺ) was murdered in the Temple at the command of Herod, ruler of Galilee and Peraea.⁶⁷

In the Christian narrative, there is no fervent relationship linking Allah’s (ﷻ) overwhelming compassion with the long years of patience by Zachariah (ﷺ) and his wife despite their childlessness, and with the constant stirring of human nature to have a child. From the Qur’anic scripture several points are borne out.

First, a human couple’s desire to have a child is valid and natural, and it is equally valid to pray to Allah (ﷻ) to fulfil this desire. The prophets (ﷺ), who are models of human behavior, are portrayed in these eternal words,

And truly We sent forth apostles before you [O Muhammad], and We appointed for them wives and offspring... (13:38).

They also pray for normal family relations, “O our Sustainer! Grant that our spouses and our offspring be a joy to our eyes...” (25:74).

It has been reported that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, “Any man who dies and leaves behind cordial and good descendants, Allah will allocate rewards to him without depleting their own rewards.”⁶⁸ Another hadith that refers to the deep love for having children is recorded by Ibn Mājah,

Marriage and wedlock are my Sunnah. Whoever chooses to act in abjuration of my Sunnah is not affiliated with me. Get married, for I will outnumber other ummahs by your prolif-

eration. *Whoever has the means to get married should do so; and whoever does not have the means should fast — as fasting acts as a protective measure [against falling in sin].*⁶⁹

Abū Dāwūd relates the following, “Marry those who are fertile and gentle; for I will inundate other ummahs with your growing numbers.”⁷⁰

Second, a husband should always be concerned with his wife and children, incorporating them in his dealings with Allah (ﷻ), asking Him for their well-being, prosperity, success, and decency. All family members should exchange mutual and supportive feelings of love and compassion for each other. In another *āyah*, for instance, Zakariyā appeals to Allah (ﷻ) for his son Yaḥyá (ﷺ), **“and make him, O my Sustainer, well-pleasing to You!” (19:6)**. A hadith recorded by Imams al-Bukhārī and Muslim quotes Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) as praying for Anas saying, “O Allah! Multiply his wealth and offspring and bless them.”⁷¹

Third, the Qur’an confirms that angels carry good news and divulge it, as they did when they told Zachariah (ﷺ) that he and his wife will soon have a son. The words **“[Yaḥyá] shall confirm the truth of a word from Allah...”** are understood to mean that he shall affirm Jesus (ﷺ) and his mission.

Zachariah (ﷺ) is mentioned eight times in the Qur’an, in *Sūrahs Āl ‘Imrān, al-An‘ām, Maryam, and al-Anbiyā’*. Yaḥyá (ﷺ) is mentioned four times — in the same four *sūrahs*. The *tafsīr* literature has rather more references to Yaḥyá (ﷺ), most of which are apparently based on the Judeo-Christian narrative about him, where he is referred to as “John the Baptist.”⁷²

In the Judeo-Christian account of who Zakariyā and Yaḥyá (ﷺ) were, there is no God-connecting event that measures or assesses a “believer’s” worth. A Roman authority can kill a prophet, or a Yahūdī community can turn against a prophet, and the perpetrators of these heinous acts do not provoke any faith-based opposition to this collective injustice. Secular authorities and religious authorities have both survived their crimes in the Judeo-Christian history. The whole issue is somewhat different in the Islamic context, mostly because determined Islamic behavior, which is brought

to light by the undeniable knowledge conveyed in this Book, motivates an uncommon response to institutional injustice. The Qur'anic descriptions of Zakariyā and Yaḥyá (ﷺ) will make it plain that some of the details mentioned in the Judeo-Christian accounts of these prophets (ﷺ) are irrelevant, while other details, much more relevant, have been omitted.

Zakariyā and his son Yaḥyá (ﷺ) were prophets sent by Allah (ﷻ) to the descendants of Israel (Ya'qūb — ﷺ). They are members of the company of prophets that Allah (ﷻ) sent every human society throughout human history,

And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob; and We guided each of them as We had guided Noah aforetime. And out of his offspring, [We bestowed prophethood upon] David, and Solomon, and Job, and Joseph, and Moses, and Aaron — for thus do We reward the doers of good — and [upon] Zachariah, and John, and Jesus, and Elijah — every one of them was of the righteous — and [upon] Ishmael, and Elisha, and Jonah, and Lot. And every one of them did We favor above other people... (6:84–86).

There is, therefore a historical continuum of a prophetic responsibility and Zakariyā and Yaḥyá (ﷺ) are part of it. As far as their bloodline is concerned, they were from the descendants of Israel or Jacob (ﷺ). From all that is known to this writer, it is clear that anyone who tries to draw a pedigree for these Prophets (ﷺ) is seriously misguided, and probably doing it to bolster some spurious ethnic or racial “credentials.”

For all those who want to know, and especially for those who take a reverential posture to Allah's (ﷻ) power, the Qur'an identifies the relevant aspects of the lives of Zakariyā and Yaḥyá (ﷺ). Firstly, before Jesus (ﷺ) was born, Zakariyā (ﷺ) was a senior minister who dedicated much of his time to Temple activity. 'Imrān, Maryam's (ﷺ) father, was the most senior of all. 'Imrān's wife and Zakariyā's (ﷺ) wife were two sisters. Both of them in

their own ways wanted dedicated and committed children but had to face childlessness. Allah (ﷻ) responded to the yearning of both mothers-to-be. ‘Imrān’s wife wanted a boy who was devoted to Allah (ﷻ). When she gave birth she said,

“O my Lord! I have given birth to a female” — and Allah has full knowledge of her delivery — “and a male is not like a female, and I have named her Maryam, and I seek Your protection for her and her offspring.” So Allah received her honorably and nurtured her exquisitely (3:36–37).

As Maryam (ﷺ) entered into the service of Allah (ﷻ) in the Temple there was contention among the seniors as to who will be her guardian. Finally they agreed to have Zakariyā (ﷺ) become her guardian.

Secondly, Maryam (ﷺ) grew up in an atmosphere of realizing and appreciating Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence. Allah (ﷻ) favored her with extraordinary events (*karāmah*).⁷³ Zakariyā (ﷺ) noticed that extra quality in Maryam (ﷺ), notwithstanding the words of the angels who told her of her elevated status above all the women of the world. Thus because of the miracle unfolding in front of his open eyes, in spite of his infertility problem, Zakariyā (ﷺ) turned to Allah (ﷻ) and asked for a baby. And Allah (ﷻ) responded in a way that ran contrary to all the observed laws of nature and human biology. Thirdly, the birth of Maryam and Yaḥyá (ﷺ) were miraculous; and their lives were also evidence of how Allah (ﷻ) is not less than His own laws of human life. Lastly, Yaḥyá (ﷺ), as a model of *taqwá*, is an example for all mankind; Allah (ﷻ) says to him,

“O Yaḥyá! Hold fast to the divine Writ with [all your] strength!” For We granted him wisdom while he was yet a little boy, as well as, by Our grace, [the gift of] compassion and purity; and he was [always] conscious of Us and full of probity for his parents; and never was he haughty or nefarious (19:12–14).

All that can be and needs to be said in this regard is that Zakariyā (ﷺ) belonged to a long tradition of maintaining the holy sanctuaries. The lesson from Zakariyā and Yaḥyá (ﷺ) is to bear witness to Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in this world. Man has to step back a moment and ask what type of governments and authorities are worth yielding to in defiance of Allah (ﷻ), when none of them can help human beings as Allah (ﷻ) can.

The miraculous birth of Yaḥyá (ﷺ) foreshadows the miraculous birth of ‘Īsá (ﷺ). Over time the latter, has become the subject of numerous questions and myths. The Qur’an takes us step by step with the Will of Allah (ﷻ) as He prepares Maryam (ﷺ) through chastity, devotion, and purity for the divine gift,

And lo! The angels said, “O Maryam! Behold, Allah has singled you out as His choice and made you pure, and raised you above all the women of the world! Remain you sincerely devout to your Sustainer, and prostrate yourself, and bow down with those who bow down [before Him]” (3:42–43).

Allah (ﷻ) “handpicked” Maryam (ﷺ) to be the recipient of a direct act of His will, as Ādam (ﷺ), the father of mankind, had earlier been the recipient of a direct act of His will. In both cases, life was willed to be created without the normal human processes of reproduction, by which a sperm and an egg unite to form a fetus. This was an event to test the mind-heart relationship. But still up to that very moment, Maryam (ﷺ) did not know exactly what would happen. The words **“and made you pure”** were supposed to counter all the negative and damaging rumors concerning her virgin status and moral excellence. There have always been disreputable imputations from hostile quarters regarding the birth of Jesus (ﷺ), originating from the Yahūd who rejected the coming of ‘Īsá (ﷺ) as they were later to reject the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ).

This is yet another reason why this *dīn* should be honored and prized; the truth comes shining through the dark corners of history and all efforts to twist and misrepresent reality. Muhammad (ﷺ),

the Last Messenger of Islam (ﷺ), was at that time under great pressure from people of earlier scriptures — including some Christians — as they were trying to destabilize and distort the word of God. So Muhammad (ﷺ) declared Allah's (ﷻ) words about Maryam (ﷺ) and the fact that she is above all the women of the world in status and dignity. She was, as this Book says, specifically selected by Allah (ﷻ). This information was presented in the context of discussions with the Christian delegation that came from Najrān to meet the Prophet (ﷺ), and debate the nature of Jesus (ﷺ). They could only be convinced by a person of extraordinary qualities communicating a word of undisputable truth.

The issue is not that hard to understand. Muhammad (ﷺ) was simply stating the facts and expressing the truth about Jesus and Mary (ﷺ); he was not reacting to Christians or trying to play Jews and Christians against each other. Nor was he trying to gain any political benefit by using these differences of opinion to whip up “national” or “sectarian” or even “religious” solidarity among the non-scriptural Arabians. He was true to his character and true to Allah (ﷻ): the truth is the truth and it has to be stated.

Muhammad (ﷺ) is reported to have said, “*There are four women above the rest in the world: Maryam bint ‘Imrān, Āsiyah bint Muzāhim — the Pharaoh’s wife — Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, and Fāṭimah bint Muhammad.*”⁷⁴ In another hadith, he said, “*The first ladies in heaven after Maryam are Fāṭimah and Khadijah.*”⁷⁵ These āyāt and hadiths establish the virtue and status of Maryam (ﷺ). Another of her significant distinctions is that she was directly addressed by the Rūḥ al-Qudus, the archangel Gabriel (ﷺ), who also appeared to her,

And [We have propounded yet another parable of God-consciousness in the story of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imrān, who guarded her chastity — whereupon We breathed of Our spirit into that [which was in her womb] — and who accepted the truth of her Sustainer’s words — and [thus], of His revelations — and was one of the truly devout (66:12).

Christianity, the Deification of Man, and Imperialism

Before disclosing the nature of Jesus' miraculous (ﷺ) birth, Allah (ﷻ) tells His messenger Muhammad (ﷺ),

This account of what was beyond the reach of your perception We [now] reveal to you; for you were not with them when they drew lots about which of them should be Maryam's guardian, and you were not with them when they contended [about it] with one another (3:44).

This indicates the vast distance between the meager knowledge in Arabia at the time the Qur'an was revealed, and the vast knowledge that descended from on high. There were no Christians in Makkah or Madinah spreading information about the fine details pertaining to the generation that preceded Jesus (ﷺ). And Muhammad (ﷺ) was not a well-traveled man, having extensive contacts with Christians who lived to the north or the south of the Arabian peninsula. So how could an individual from Makkah speak with such confidence on these issues? Only people who are void of detached objectivity could claim that Muhammad (ﷺ) was merely stitching together a religion from the Jewish and Christian religions of the time. This *āyah* discloses a significant detail about the keepers of the Temple who competed with each other to take care of Maryam (ﷺ) when her mother brought her to serve in the Temple, in fulfillment of her vow to Allah (ﷻ). This particular detail is not available in the normal circles of the Old or New Testaments; only a few exceptionally learned clergy may have had knowledge of the drawing of lots to determine who would be responsible for Maryam (ﷺ). The Qur'an, the infallible Word of Allah (ﷻ), tells us that Zakarīyā won the draw and became Maryam's (ﷺ) guardian.

All this was beyond the knowledge available to Muhammad (ﷺ). He was provided with these *āyāt* by divine revelation. The high-ranking Christians from Najrān should have acknowledged that Muhammad (ﷺ) could not have known these facts, and that the Qur'an, therefore, had to be the Book of Allah (ﷻ). As the Christians in the delegation did not dispute this Qur'anic statement,

it must be concluded that they too, like many others at the time, actually knew that, in fact, Muhammad (ﷺ) really was Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), and that the Qur'an was really divine scripture. They were just unable or unwilling to accept what they actually knew.

At this point Allah (ﷻ) relates the incontrovertible facts about the birth of 'Īsá (ﷺ), the supernatural birth that seems amazing to man but is an easy, straightforward matter for Allah (ﷻ).

Lo! The angels said, "O Maryam! Behold, Allah sends you the glad tiding, through a word from Him, [of a son] who shall become known as Christ in the life to come, and [shall be] of those who are drawn near to Allah. And he shall speak to men in his cradle, and as a grown man, and shall be of the righteous. Said she, "O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?"

[The angel] answered, "Thus it is: Allah creates what He wills; when He wills a thing to be, He but says to it, 'Be' — and it is. And He will impart to your son revelation, and wisdom, and the Torah, and the Gospel, and [will make him] an apostle unto the Children of Israel,"

[Saying to his people], "I have come to you with an *āyah* from your Sustainer. I shall create for you out of clay, as it were, the shape of a bird, and then breathe into it, so that it might become a bird by Allah's permission; and I shall heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life by Allah's leave. And I shall let you know what you may eat and what you should store up in your houses. Behold, in all this there is indeed a message for you, if you are [truly] committed" (3:45–49).

Maryam's (ﷺ) purity, chastity, virtue, and devotion prepared her for this phenomenon. And here she was for the first time listening to the angels tell her of this miraculous event. And Allah's (ﷻ) words became 'Īsá; and 'Īsá (ﷺ) was the Messiah.

How did this happen in practical terms? How does the word of Allah (ﷻ) conveyed by an angel to Maryam (ﷺ) become the human Messiah? This matter can only be considered in terms of an earlier *āyah* of *Sūrah* Āl ‘Imrān in which Allah (ﷻ) says,

He has revealed to you the Book in which there are firmly understood *āyāt* — and these are the heart of the Book — and in which there are others that are allegorical. As for those who have divergence in their hearts, they will follow phantom meanings for the purpose of sedition or for the purpose of subjective interpretation (3:7).

What is the Christian version of the birth of Jesus (ﷺ)? It goes something like this. The angel Gabriel (ﷺ) was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary (ﷺ). And he came to her and said, “Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angels said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the ‘son of the Most High;’ and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary (ﷺ) said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no husband?” And the angel said to her, “The holy spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the son of God.”⁷⁶

The entire debate between Muslims and Christians about the nature of Jesus (ﷺ), whom they both recognize and believe in as the Messiah, comes down to the human/divine nature of Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ). The fact is that neither Muslims nor Christians — nor any other humans for that matter — have incontrovertible

evidence of what distinguishes human nature from its heavenly essence. This is an unresolved mystery to life itself, whether in the person of Jesus (ﷺ) or any other human being. Within everyone there is this spirit and liveliness (“human life”) that science has been unable to quantify or define. This being the case, there is no excuse for forsaking Jesus (ﷺ) just because human intellect cannot grasp the “logic” of how he was born. Thinking about the “nature” or the “life” of Jesus (ﷺ) should be enough to deter arrogant assertions or self-centered affirmations. None of us, Christians and Muslims alike, have any independent information about the conception, birth, life, or nature of Jesus (ﷺ); the only reliable source in humanity’s grasp is that which comes from Allah (ﷻ) Himself. And He says that this life is equivalent to a puff of His *rūḥ* (vital essence, soulfulness). And so, when He wanted to create Jesus (ﷺ), He realized His intent simply by saying *Be*; and so it was. These Qur’anic words are clear, direct, and uncomplicated, so the Muslims have no grounds for uncertainty or disputation about the birth and nature of Jesus (ﷺ).

Now consider the position held by most Christians. They interpret the birth of Jesus (ﷺ) as having to do with the *logos*, a Greek word with various meanings, which in its religious context is associated especially with the divine “Word,” reason, or wisdom. In the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, a translation made between 3–2BCE, reportedly by 72 Jewish scholars (hence its name), the Hebrew term *Word of God* is translated as *logos* or reason.⁷⁷ It is this use of *logos* as *Word of God* that is central in Christian theology, where it refers to the second “Person” of the Trinity — Christ. In the Old Testament, God’s Word is both the medium of communication, especially of God’s will or law, and the agent of creative power (Genesis, 1:3,6,9), by which God calls all things into being. By the time of the Hebrew Prophets (ﷺ) — 9th to 8th centuries BCE — the *Word of the Lord* had almost achieved the status of an independently divine hypostasis or substantial reality.

The Christian understanding of this increasingly contentious interpretation took a more obscure turn. The Stoic philosophers taught that the universe is governed by a divine *logos*, “reason,” or

“law.”⁷⁸ When Hellenistic Judaism came under the influence of Stoic ideas, the *Word of the Lord* was assimilated to the Stoic *logos* and also associated with the originally distinct Hebrew concept of wisdom. The Hellenistic emphasis on the absolute transcendence of God resulted in the interposing of divine intermediaries between God and creation. Thus in Judaism the divine “Word” and “Wisdom” were further personified and conceived of as God’s divine agents in creation. The Old Testament *Word* and the Stoic *logos* are linked in the writings of the Egyptian Jewish philosopher Philo in the 1st century BCE.⁷⁹ The *logos* is both the *divine pattern* from which creation is copied and the *divine power* in creation, the intermediary between the transcendent God and humanity. Philo used a variety of titles to describe the *logos* as mediator. The *logos* was, according to him, God’s *first-born son*, the *image* and *ambassador*, and humanity’s *advocate* and *high priest*. In identifying the pre-existent *logos* with Jesus (ﷺ), it is clear that the New Testament Pauline writings are influenced by the same background of ideas as those of Philo. In the concept of the pre-existent Christ, Paul joins the Jewish ideas of the pre-existent Messiah and the pre-existent Wisdom and Law. In the prologue to the Johannine Gospel, the *logos* is identified with the eternal God as God’s creative Word, by whom all things are made, and who becomes incarnate in the man Jesus of Nazareth (ﷺ).

The theologians of the early Church found in the *logos* the ideal concept for expressing the relationship of Christ to God, as well as an apologetic point of contact with Hellenistic philosophy. The orthodox Christian teaching held that the pre-existent *logos*, Jesus (ﷺ), is eternally begotten or generated of the Father, not made, and thus is of the same substance as God and coeternal with Him. Before this position was worked out explicitly in the Christian creeds, two divergent “heretical” views were expounded by theologians. One tendency, that of the school of Alexandria, was to view the *logos* as subordinate to the Father. The “extreme” form of this view was Arianism, which espoused that “there was a time when the Son was not.” It held that the *logos* was created by God out of nothing, and thus was not God.⁸⁰ This view was condemned at the Council of Nicaea (325CE).⁸¹

The other tendency identified the Father and the *logos* (Son) so closely as to deny any distinctions in the being of God. The *logos* was considered to be only a power of God. This view had many exponents in the third century CE and is known as Monarchianism or Sabellianism, after Sabellius, who taught that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are only names applied to the modes of God's action.⁸² This latter view was condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381CE. The contestation between these two heretical tendencies led to the eventual formulation of the orthodox trinity.

All this confusion among Christians speaks for itself. The "Christian theological" mind attempted to get a grip on the nature of Jesus (ﷺ) who was born without a physical father, and ended up virtually disavowing logic and the power of the mind.

We Muslims may well ask: what is this *blow* or *puff* of Allah (ﷻ)? How does this "breathing" from Allah (ﷻ) into the human element cause life? But we should accept the limits of our humble minds and say we simply do not know; we cannot come up with a scientific answer. Our minds are not capable of scientifically analyzing God; we were not created for this purpose. We were created to be the extension of God's will on earth; we were not created or fashioned to be His look-alike or His "physical" image on earth. To begin with, it was Allah's (ﷻ) exhaling into our common father Adam that made Adam (ﷺ) worthy of respect and esteem. Thus a human Adam (ﷺ) has the potential to outdo the angels. Man has a higher status and dignity than just to surrender his corpse to worms and germs when he dies.

The birth of Jesus (ﷺ) should be placed in the context of human reality. That is to say a new life comes into existence when a man and a woman conceive. The process of fertilization begins with the penetration of the female egg by a single male sperm. The mechanics of the biological processes by which this fertilization results in the birth of a human child some nine months later have been scientifically charted; indeed, it is one of the oldest established facts of life for obvious reasons. But Allah (ﷻ) bypassed this human reproductive process — a process of His own creation — when He created a human being, Jesus (ﷺ), in more or less the same way that

He created Adam and Eve (ﷻ). In this case, an existing human woman, Maryam (ﷺ), received the “breath” out of which human life was issued, and the result was the birth of Jesus (ﷺ).

Is this “breath” *God’s Word* or *logos*? Is this *Word* or *logos* an antecedent of His will, which is expressed by His word *Be*? Is this literally a word, or is it a reference to His decree? Is the Word Jesus (ﷺ) himself? Or did Jesus (ﷺ) develop from the essence of the Word? All such questions are futile and pointless, generating only more questions and doubts without providing any answers. The simple truth is that Allah (ﷻ) decided to originate a life outside the normal process of conception, pregnancy, and birth, and He did so in means we cannot know. If the issue were to be approached with this in mind we would not have the unending arguments in theology that have been bouncing back and forth for hundreds of years.

The angels delivered this good news to Maryam (ﷺ); and in it ‘Īsá (ﷺ) was given his name, and was attributed to his mother: son of Mary (ﷺ). Understandably, Maryam (ﷺ) heard the angel’s tid-ing with some mystification. She turned to her Sustainer and asked Him to help her understand this unprecedented event, **“O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?”** The answer that came to her, and all those asking the same question, could not be simpler, **“Thus it is: Allah creates what He wills; when He wills a thing to be, He but says to it, ‘Be’ — and it is.”** If the people of previous scripture can bring themselves to realize that God can do whatever He wants to do, there is no longer any puzzle about an uncommon or irregular birth. This whole miraculous birth that consumes theologians and philosophers is plainly and clearly explained by these words from Allah (ﷻ).

The angel goes on to tell Maryam (ﷺ) more about the son to be born to her and how he shall contend with the Children of Israel, **“And He will pass on to your son [the knowledge of] revelation, and wisdom, and the Torah, and the Gospel.”** It appears from this *āyah* that the Torah and the Gospel were meant to go together. The bearers of the Torah had lost the spirit of intimate communication with the meanings of scripture, and they needed it back; hence the Gospel. Many Christians do not have it within

themselves to combine the Torah with the Gospel, when in fact they complement each other. The Gospel was not meant to contradict or supersede the Torah; it was meant to correct the mind-sets of the followers and students of the Torah. The Gospel was meant to bring about a spirit of renewal in the Israeli context, to take the readers of the Torah out of a “legalistic” understanding of God and imbue their hearts with a personal relationship with God. This is what Jesus (ﷺ) tried to achieve, but the Israelis proved too stubborn to accept his mission.

And [We will make Jesus] an apostle unto the Children of Israel; [He will say that] I have come to you with a message from your Sustainer. I shall create for you out of clay, as it were, the shape of a bird, and then breathe into it, so that it might become a bird by Allah’s authorization; and I shall heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life by Allah’s authorization; and I shall let you know what you may eat and what you should store up in your houses. Behold, in all this there is indeed a message from your Sustainer if you are committed to His power presence (3:49).

This *āyah* leaves no doubt that Jesus (ﷺ) was sent first and foremost to the Children of Israel. He is, after all, regarded as a “Hebrew prophet.” In this reading of history, the legalistic traditions that had become the religion of the Children of Israel were of much concern to Jesus (ﷺ). The Torah, in its original uncorrupted form, was essential to his mission. The Torah was to be combined with the Gospel to rejuvenate the original covenant by stimulating passion for God in their hearts and sensitizing their consciences to the overwhelming presence of God in all spheres of human life and activity.

The involvement of Allah (ﷻ) in man’s affairs was demonstrated by Jesus (ﷺ). He brought back to life people who had died. One person who had been blind was granted sight. In another case, a person with Hansen’s disease (leprosy) was miraculously cured. Jesus (ﷺ) could even tell the Children of Israel what they had

stored and hidden inside their own homes and dwellings without ever having entered them. And all of this was done as an act of Allah (ﷻ) through the agency of Jesus (ﷺ). None of these miracles should pose any difficulty for Muslims who have cleared their minds and understood, without questioning, Allah’s (ﷻ) ability and power to determine whatever He wants done, **“Verily His command is such that when He wills a thing to be, He but says to it, ‘Be’ — and it is” (36:82).**

One human conjecture of why Allah (ﷻ) would have equated the substance of Jesus (ﷺ), prior to his physical existence, with a word may be that a word is an intelligent sound that bears the transformation from the purely spiritual to the human physical. This is how man himself is born: from the purely non-material (pre-life) into the mortal individual that he becomes after birth (worldly life), **“...the Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was but Allah’s Apostle — [the fulfilment of] His word which He had conveyed unto Mary — and a soul created by Him” (4:171).**

With this in mind Muslims need not enter into conjecture or disputation about Jesus (ﷺ). Following the Qur’an, Muslims always attribute Jesus to his mother Maryam (ﷺ), saying **“Jesus, the son of Mary.”** This automatically sets aside the Christian thesis that Jesus (ﷺ) is the begotten Son of God, as well as giving distinction and honor to Mary as the mother of Jesus (ﷺ). If there is any role for logic in this matter, it is in realizing that there is a precedent for Jesus’ (ﷺ) miraculous birth — indeed another birth that was more mysterious and miraculous than that of Jesus: that of Adam (ﷺ). **“In the sight of Allah, the nature of Jesus is as the nature of Adam, whom He created out of dust and then said to him, “Be” — and he is” (3:59).**

The issue of miracles in the course of prophetic history and in the course of Israeli responses to the scriptural call is an integral part of the life of ‘Īsā (ﷺ). In this context he proclaimed to the descendants of Israel,

**I have come to you with an āyah from your Sustainer.
I shall create for you an image, as it were, of a bird, and**

then breathe into it, so that it might become a bird by Allah's authority; and I shall heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life by Allah's authority; and I shall tell you of what you may eat and what you should stock up in your homes (3:49).

The miraculous has been a constant theme of the prophets (ﷺ), who came to demonstrate the presence of Allah's (ﷻ) power in the life of individuals and societies, over short time periods or throughout the course of human history. Miracles are not limited to the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible. Often, the miracles are similar: curing the sick, resurrecting the dead, and affecting a change in the laws of nature and the common expectations of man. With all the cumulative experience of human history, any objection to miracles is shortsighted, an expression of ignorance, or a defiance that reflects a larger prejudice against God. But once the fact of miracles happening is accepted, the question becomes: why do they happen? What is the meaning of these miracles when they do occur, are observed by human senses, and affirmed by the human mind?

If the Israeli historical mind-set and the way they interpreted these miracles are examined, the older layers of tradition in the Old Testament, for example, depict miracles as signs of divine confirmation of a peoples' leader, especially in a time of crisis. In Exodus 4, Moses (ﷺ) was commissioned by God to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt and into the land of the Canaanites, which God had promised to give them. When Moses (ﷺ) asked how he can persuade the people that he had indeed been called by God to this task, God provided him with a series of signs with which to persuade any doubters: his rod turned into a snake and then back into a rod; his hand was, according to Israeli historical accounts, stricken with, and then healed of, leprosy; and when he poured out the water of the Nile, it became blood (Exodus, 4:1–10).⁸³

In the later Old Testament tradition, miracles were promised as signs of God's coming deliverance of the people from their oppressors, and of God's special care for the faithful during their times of difficulty before the promise was fulfilled. Thus in the

Book of Isaiah, 35:1–7, the restoration of the realm was accompanied by the renewal of the whole created order, with the result that the desert bloomed and new streams of water appeared, thereby transforming it; the blind could see, the deaf could hear, the lame could leap about, and the mute could sing.⁸⁴

In the Christian tradition, there is a further development of this motif, which sees miracles as signs of God’s intention to restore creation and vindicate the “divinely chosen people.” In the story of Jesus’ (ﷺ) controversy with both the scribes and his own family over his ability to expel demons from those possessed of these evil powers (Mark, 3:19–35; Matthew, 12:22–50; Luke, 11:14–16; Luke, 8:19–21), there is no question from a Christian perspective that Jesus (ﷺ) does indeed possess this power; the question is only about the source of his power. Is he in league with Satan (Beelzebub)? The answer (Luke, 11:20, New International Version) is that his exorcisms are manifestations of God’s power, preparing for and already bringing into reality God’s rule over the creation, “But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” Elsewhere in the church sanctified Gospels, Jesus’ (ﷺ) miracles are seen as signs of divine forgiveness, as in the story of the paralytic who is both cured and pronounced forgiven (Mark, 2:1–12). In Mark 5:21–43, the raising to life of Jairus’ daughter is clearly a sign of triumph over death. Elsewhere in Acts, miracles are represented as fulfilling a range of functions. In Acts 1:18, Judas is destroyed by an act of divine judgment, as a result of his betrayal of Jesus (ﷺ) to the authorities.⁸⁵

The above is an overview of what miracles meant to people who live in the Jewish or Christian understanding of whatever is left of the original scriptures that were revealed to Moses and Jesus (ﷺ). As was the case with Allah’s (ﷻ) word and how it became a *logos*, and how the Christian understanding of the *logos* became a trinity, and how in all this minds were confused and logic was distorted, similarly, the issue of miracles has been confused and distorted. To put it back into its original shape and for its original purpose, the Qur’anic discourse is essential. In following the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ), it becomes apparent that miracles were intended to be

“shock therapy” for the Children of Israel and other materialistic societies that were blessed with a prophet or messenger. They were the strongest way of getting across to ordinary people the meaning of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in human activity and social enterprise. Prophets and apostles (ﷺ) could preach the presence of Allah (ﷻ) to any society on earth night and day and people would go about their routine business unmoved and unimpressed by these unremarkable prophets (ﷺ). But when these same “unremarkable” prophets (ﷺ) used God’s power to demonstrate God’s presence in the form of a miracle then, and only then, did everyone suddenly take note. People are affected by a human being who is capable of turning the laws of nature upside down and inside out. So when a prophet told them that the miracle was **“by God’s leave,”** they had no logical choice but to accept the fact and conform to this marvelous and astounding power presence of Allah (ﷻ).

It is this crucial definition of a miracle that is lost in the Jewish and Christian understanding. Allah (ﷻ) cared so much that He had prophets and emissaries (ﷺ) perform miracles to win the love and devotion of His human creatures by winning their hearts; it is not that He needs them but that He loves them and they need Him. Human beings should learn from this experience and not abuse this divine grace. But some of them do; some still demand miracles to yield to Allah (ﷻ). They behave as if all this historical grace does not exist. They cannot see how arrogant they show themselves to be when they expect Allah (ﷻ) to show them a miracle. It is within this psychology that ‘Īsá (ﷺ) demonstrated the power presence of Allah (ﷻ) on earth. So, therefore, the Qur’an reminds the new generation of godly committed souls of some of Jesus’ (ﷺ) miracles: remaking a bird; granting sight to a blind man; healing a leper; and telling people what they have hoarded and hidden in the privacy of their homes.

In view of the accumulated scientific knowledge since that time, let us reconsider these miracles. **“I shall create...”** This is a crucial choice of words; normally, no one and nothing creates except Allah (ﷻ). Taken literally, these words would imply that Jesus (ﷺ) is a creator. And, indeed, Christians who are familiar

with the Arabic language use this *āyah* to try to prove to Muslims that the Qur'an itself does present evidence that Jesus (ﷺ) is God. This is the sort of thing than can happen when words are taken out of context and no rational distinction is made between the *shar'ī* use of a word and its linguistic use. To rebut this Christian interpretation is not difficult because it goes back to the basic difference between man, the created, and Allah (ﷻ), the Creator.

The word *akhluqu* (*I shall create*) spoken by 'Īsá (ﷺ) delivers the linguistic content of the word and not its legalistic or *shar'ī* meaning. Remember, 'Īsá (ﷺ) was up against the literalist and dogmatic Children of Israel, who adhered to a word-for-word and close-minded understanding of scripture. One of the major purposes of the mission of 'Īsá (ﷺ) was to liberate them from their strict and rigorous self-centered interpretation of scripture. To do so, he chose the word *akhluqu* to indicate his ability to do what was regarded as impossible: to fashion the image of a bird into which life would ultimately be placed. Clearly he was using the word here in a limited, linguistic sense rather than in its full, *shar'ī* sense.

Another *āyah* of the Qur'an that demonstrates the distinction between the linguistic rather than the legalistic usages of the same word is,

And [thereupon Joseph] said to the one of the two [cellmates in prison] whom he considered saved, "Mention me to your lord [when you are free]!" But Satan caused him to forget to mention [Joseph] to his lord, and so he remained in prison a few [more] years (12:42).

Here the word *rabb* (*lord*) does not have the religious legal meaning most often used to refer to Allah (ﷻ); it has the linguistic meaning that signifies *master* or *superior*.

Another response to the Christian allegation of the Qur'an implying the divinity of Jesus (ﷺ) is the fact that he did not create a new species; he merely duplicated what had already been created by Allah (ﷻ) Himself: that is, a bird. Had he created an animal unknown to mankind, a new and unknown bird, there might have

been some basis for Christians to argue for the divinity of Jesus (ﷺ), but this is obviously not the case; ‘Īsá (ﷺ) was simply copying an image that had already existed and was well known to his people.

Yet the simplest and clearest reply to this Christian argument is simply to place this *āyah* in the context of the sentences that follow. Reading on, it cannot be understood in any other way than that ‘Īsá (ﷺ) initiated a bird’s life **“by the authority of Allah.”** If Jesus (ﷺ) were a creator he would not need the permission or the empowerment of Allah (ﷻ) Himself, **“[I shall] breathe into it, so that it might become a bird by Allah’s authorization.”** The power to create that ‘Īsá (ﷺ) used to give life to the bird was not his own, but that of Allah (ﷻ), and that which he used by Allah’s (ﷻ) authority. Nothing could possibly be clearer.

The intent and purpose of this miracle, as this writer understands it, is to demonstrate for religious traditionalists and materialist God-deniers that man has the potential to become an instrument of the will of God. And once Allah (ﷻ) chooses to do this, anything is possible for man, even resurrecting the dead or inducing life itself.

Then there is ‘Īsá’s (ﷺ) miracle of giving eyesight to a person who was blind all his life. Some people are born with partial or total loss of vision. Common causes include developmental malformations, damage to the eyes due to infection, birth trauma, a significant loss of oxygen (hypoxia) during birth, and genetic diseases that affect the eye itself or the nerves to the brain’s vision center. The Qur’anic word *akmah*, which is used for the blind person to whom Jesus (ﷺ) gave sight, means a person who was born blind. There is not enough information to say for sure whether this refers to complete blindness at birth or to a partial blindness at birth that progressively became total blindness. There are a number of possible reasons for this, but even today, when there are procedures for reversing the effects of many eye diseases that cause blindness, there is little that doctors can do for a child that is born blind. Yet 2,000 years ago, ‘Īsá (ﷺ) healed a man unable to see since birth and by doing so demonstrated for the hearts-of-stone humans around him that with Allah’s (ﷻ) authorization nothing is impossible.

Then he went on to cure a person with leprosy, which is a chronic bacterial infection that results in damage primarily to the peripheral nerves (nerves outside the brain and spinal cord), skin, and mucous membrane of the nose, testes, and eyes. Most of those who are exposed to the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae* do not develop leprosy because their immune systems fight off the infection. In those who do develop the disease, the infection can range from mild to severe.⁸⁶ Not enough information is available to figure out which of these symptoms were experienced by the leper who was cured by ‘Isá (ﷺ), but what is known is that the deformities caused by leprosy, and the fear of its being contagious — although it is in fact only contagious in its early stages — led to ostracism, and people with the disease often were isolated in institutions or colonies. In some regions of the world this practice is still common. This was the situation of lepers at the time of Jesus (ﷺ), hence the impact of his demonstration of the power of Allah (ﷻ) by curing this apparently incurable disease.

And finally there was the miracle of telling people what they had hidden within their own homes for future use, the one which perhaps, although apparently the simplest, may have affected people the most, because it impacted the majority of them directly. These miracles were not meant to give the impression that Jesus (ﷺ) was God, as an official, hierarchical, and establishmentarian church later believed and preached. They were meant to illustrate that God’s will lies dormant in human life and man can access that divine will, without any crossover between what is human and what is divine, and then manifest God’s power on earth. This does not contradict the Torah; it rather affirms it,

And I [Jesus] have come to confirm the truth of whatever there still remains of the Torah and to make lawful to you some of the things that were forbidden to you. And I have come to you with an *āyah* [a demonstration of Allah’s presence in human affairs]: so remain conscious of Allah and pay heed unto me (3:50).

Jesus (ﷺ) came to relieve the Children of Israel of the legalistic burdens they had incurred during their long and torturous history of defiance and indifference to scripture and prophets (ﷺ). This is expressed in the *āyah*,

So, then for the wickedness committed by those who followed the Jewish faith did We deny them certain of the good things of life which [in times past] had been allowed them; and [We did this] for their having so often turned away from the path to God... (4:160).

Among the legal burdens incurred by the Children of Israel were such things as not being permitted to eat some types of seafood, camel meat, and some meat-cuts that had fat in them, and working on the Sabbath.

These miracles were clear demonstrations presented by Prophet 'Īsā (ﷺ) to win people over to their Sustainer. Alas, he was misunderstood by the Children of Israel, who thought he was contradicting and violating the "Law." He was also misunderstood by those who came to call themselves Christians, raising the son of Mary (ﷺ) to the status of divinity. These two extremes still live in the Jewish and Christian worlds. Both of them are wrong. Jesus (ﷺ) was not heretical, whatever some Jews may say, and Jesus (ﷺ) was not God, as most Christians proclaim. Jesus (ﷺ) was Allah's (ﷻ) prophet who came to show the people around him, mostly the Children of Israel, and to a lesser extent, distant people in other lands and times, that he is Allah's (ﷻ) emissary and envoy, and that Allah's (ﷻ) will can manifest His power through man when man decides to become integrated with Allah (ﷻ). This whole episode unfolded without anthropomorphizing (ascribing human features to) God, and without deifying man.

In the 18th and 19th centuries CE, in both Britain and Europe, rationalistic thinkers began to question the possibility of miracles, on the ground that they were contrary to natural law or the laws of science. Some well-meaning apologists, among Muslims as well as Jews and Christians, sought to show that the miracles

were no more than natural occurrences. The words of Jesus (ﷺ) are as refreshing and energizing today concerning rationalists and materialists as they were then concerning legalists and zealots, **“Verily, Allah is my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer; so conform unto Him [alone]: this is a straight way” (3:51).**

When 'Isá (ﷺ) earlier said, **“And I have come to affirm whatever is bequeathed of the Torah and I have come to make lawful for you what was previously unlawful...,”** with these words he spoke the truth about the origins of Christianity: that the Torah was revealed to past generations to become their guide in life — even though it was revealed to a particular society, the Children of Israel — and remained current and valid as it was applicable to all humans. Jesus (ﷺ) came to modify some of the restrictions that the Israelis had brought upon themselves. These restrictions amounted to penalties that were specific to the Children of Israel. But with Jesus (ﷺ) a new page was to be turned in human history and these restrictions were to be lifted; and Jesus (ﷺ) was the herald of this good news.

So Jesus (ﷺ) did not repudiate Allah's (ﷻ) laws as they were enshrined in the Torah. His mission may have concentrated on the human spirit and will, and downplayed the traditional rigid approach to law and God; a moral and legal equilibrium was to be consummated in which social law did not intrude on an individual's affinity with Allah (ﷻ), and in which a person's love of Allah (ﷻ) did not invalidate His helping instructions to mankind, otherwise referred to as legal procedures. It is not possible to have Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn* on earth with the dominance of one side at the expense of the other.

Alas, as time went on, Christianity developed with no consideration for Allah's (ﷻ) law and will. There is a spiritual fatalism in the way “Christians” interpreted Christianity. If someone believes in Jesus (ﷺ) as God and Lord, and loves everyone else, he thinks he is guaranteed a free pass to heaven. All the love that God expressed to man by revealing a scripture that appeals equally to head and heart, equally to conscience and community, and equally to the singular self and the plural self was dismissed from the scope

of those who claimed to be carrying the mission of Jesus (ﷺ). This sometimes simplistic and sometimes evasive understanding of Jesus (ﷺ) and the Gospel, which was originally in line with all other prophets (ﷺ) and divine scriptures, has fostered an atmosphere that in turn has nurtured evil wickedness, power-lust, and selfishness on the human stage, in such forms as totalitarianism, monarchy, communism, fascism, racism, capitalism, and nationalism. Such “isms” and others have not only pitched the world into strife on many levels, but have also extinguished the faith in the Living God that should ignite the human spirit with resistance to the evils of tyranny, exploitation, absolutism, and imperialism.

What exists today is a “Christianity” that is devoid of the love God expressed by His balanced “legal” care for an otherwise error-prone humanity. The history of humanity since Jesus (ﷺ) has seen the emergence of a ruthlessness and inhumanity in Europe, now spreading to all regions of the world, that knows no God, with policies and agendas that acknowledge no deity, and with wars that cannot be justified by any Testament, old or new.

What Jesus (ﷺ) set forth as a “corrective movement” within the traditional law of the Children of Israel has turned into a corrosive movement by those who claim they are his followers. The catastrophe the pseudo-Christians have brought upon the world cannot be overlooked with a dumbing down of our intelligence. This new level of international tension and antagonism may be bringing the world to the threshold of mutual annihilation by weapons of mass destruction, intercontinental missiles, nuclear devices, and the latest generation of deadly weapons; all of this, or at least most of it, can be traced to the fact that nominal Christians broke out of Allah’s (ﷻ) *dīn* once in the name of emancipation, again in the name of revolution, and yet again in the name of freedom. The names were not lacking; the excuses were plentiful. But this is what happens when people do not want to put allegiance and acquiescence where they rightly belong.

The materialistic, worldly powers of *kufr* have pushed history to its limits. Today, there are “superpowers” that do not for one minute think of Allah (ﷻ) as having the power to interfere with

their military build-ups and with the might of their armed forces. They roam the earth at will, thinking they can get away with murder, massacres, and genocide. They loot and steal from other people and even from their own children's futures. If there was ever a time to heed these prophetic words it is now,

And I [Jesus] have come to you with an āyah from your Sustainer; remain, then, conscious of Allah's power presence, and pay heed to me. Verily Allah is my Sustainer and your Sustainer, so conform to Him [alone]: that is a straight way" (3:50–51).

But who in the "Christian" world will accept the challenge to show they are conscious of God's power presence on earth? Should anyone really and practically expect such token Christians as the presidents and kings in predominantly "Christian" countries to factor into their foreign and domestic policies the power presence of God? Their attitude is in effect, "How dare anyone repeat to us the words of Jesus Christ (ﷺ)?"

It is an enormous task to convince the likes of George W. Bush, his successors, and his counterparts, who claim they are Christians, to yield to the power of God. And that is why they are on a collision course with God. And the miracles that Jesus (ﷺ) executed are rays of hope to the powerless of the world who, by binding to God, can eventually overturn the physical and natural laws upon which arrogant and self-aggrandizing powers depend for their bouts of aggression and fits of imperialism. Jesus (ﷺ) says to the ancient and current Children of Israel, **"be conscious and guard yourselves [against Allah's wrath and retribution]."** Do any of those who are armed to the teeth and intoxicated with worldly power listen to Jesus (ﷺ)? Most of those who are willing to acknowledge and accept the lessons of these miracles will come from the underclasses of people who are better able to bind to Allah (ﷻ) and demonstrate God's will through the medium of humanity.

What Happened to Jesus (ﷺ) in the End

The *āyāt* then move on from the glad tidings of the birth of Jesus (ﷺ) to information about his life, mission, words, and miracles; all revealed to Muhammad (ﷺ) while he was in session with the Najrānī Christian delegation. Now the educational words of this Scripture go directly to ‘Īsá (ﷺ) and the way he felt when he sensed that the Children of Israel were intent on defiance and denial of Allah (ﷻ). ‘Īsá (ﷺ) asked for help,

And when Jesus became aware of their rejection [of Allah’s power presence] he asked, “Who will be my assistants for Allah’s cause?” The white-garbed ones replied, “We shall be [your] assistants [in the cause] of Allah! We are committed to Allah, and bear you witness that we have surrendered ourselves to Him! O our Sustainer! We are committed to what You have bestowed from on high, and we follow this apostle; make us one, then, with all who bear witness [to your power presence]!” (3:52–53).

The *āyāt*, after outlining the good news that was given to Maryam before she gave birth to ‘Īsá (ﷺ), skip the details of his life (which are mentioned in other *sūrah*s of the Qur’an) and move straight to the moment in Jesus’ (ﷺ) life when he felt the rejection of the Children of Israel, despite his demonstrations of miracles and supernatural events to persuade them to turn back to Allah (ﷻ). All these demonstrations were not enough to shock or jolt them back into conformity to Allah (ﷻ). It could only have been the power of Allah (ﷻ) that made it possible for ‘Īsá (ﷺ) to do what he did, and they must have known that. Even as ‘Īsá (ﷺ) came to relieve them of their legal burdens and the scriptural restrictions they were under, they still would not make that leap of faith. As these Children of Israel showed their stubbornness, ‘Īsá (ﷺ) pleaded, **“Who shall be my supporters for the cause of Allah?”**

The context of this significant statement should be considered. Jesus (ﷺ) was Allah’s (ﷻ) prophet. He had spent many years

with the people around him, who by now should have known him well. He had even stepped forward to demonstrate Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence on earth by means of the miracles he performed. Yet a very influential segment of society still came out against him: the Children of Israel, the very ones he thought would become his earnest supporters because of their history of familiarity with the divine message. Instead, these were the first to take issue with him, oppose his mission, and turn against him. At this critical moment Jesus (ﷺ) wanted to consolidate his supporters, who numerically were few.

The important point here is that humans are required to reach a “critical mass” of human support before the Will of Allah (ﷻ) works its way through the layers of opposition from established religious and political vested interests. While God’s message is not intended primarily or only for individuals, even if these individuals are prophets (ﷺ), there has to be a human support base that can break through the rubric of religious and establishmentarian conservatism. It is in this circumstance that ‘Īsá (ﷺ) said, **“Who are my helpers for the cause of Allah?”**

And a response came from a group of people whom the Qur’an calls the *ḥawārīyūn*, **“We shall be your helpers for the cause of Allah! We are committed to Allah, and bear you witness that we have surrendered ourselves to Him [that is, we are Muslims].”** These adherents asked Jesus (ﷺ) to bear witness that they have yielded to Allah (ﷻ). This is the crux of all scriptural communication: man yields to Allah (ﷻ), and in doing so acknowledges Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence in this life and this world. Failing to do this places man outside this historical narrative and positions him on a collision course with Allah (ﷻ), even if this same man drowns himself in rituals and traditions that may be rooted in faith but divorced from any substantive relationship with Allah (ﷻ).

These partisans of Jesus (ﷺ) then turned toward Allah (ﷻ) and said, **“O our Sustainer! We are committed to what You have imparted from on high, and we follow this apostle; so make us one with all who bear witness [to this truth]!”** This suggests a very essential element in man’s relationship with Allah (ﷻ); once

people accept the content of scripture, they enter into a direct, personal relationship with Allah (ﷻ). At this point, as they can feel they are in the presence of Allah (ﷻ), they learn to address Him on that basis. Their obedience and loyalty are now to Allah (ﷻ); from here on they follow the prophet and do their best to stand for Allah's (ﷻ) power on earth. Then these Muslims say, **“And enlist us [O Allah] with those who are witnesses [to this fact].”** They want to be assembled into the company of all people who have stepped forward in their own societies to side with Allah (ﷻ) against arrogance, ignorance, disobedience, and prejudice.

In the historical interaction between Muslims and Christians some say that these supporters of Jesus (ﷺ) are his “disciples.” But the word *disciple* derives from a Greek term meaning *learner, pupil*. In modern usage it has come to mean simply a *follower*, without any sense of schooling. In the early Greek translation of the Hebrew Torah, this word is used only twice (Jeremiah, 13:21; 20:11), but it becomes a common term in the New Testament, referring to those who were taught by John the Baptist, the Pharisees, and Jesus (ﷺ).⁸⁷ Even after Jesus (ﷺ) left the scene, those who followed his teachings were called disciples of the lord (Acts, 9:1), just as the Pharisees were called Moses' (ﷺ) disciples (John, 9:28). The Twelve Apostles, who were “uniquely chosen by Jesus (ﷺ) and assigned a special role in his teaching ministry,” are referred to at times as the Twelve Disciples.

The two expressions *apostles* and *disciples* are used interchangeably in places (Matthew, 10:1–2; Luke, 6:13), but in general Christian usage, the word *apostle* is more restrictive than the term *disciple*. An *apostle* is one who is sent with a commission; apostles are disciples, but disciples are apostles only if appointed as such (Luke, 6:13). In the Book of Acts, the term is used almost exclusively to refer to members of the newly established church. It is virtually synonymous with “Christian” (Acts, 6:1; 9:19), a term that was given to the disciples in Antioch (Acts, 11:26) and which appears only three times in the New Testament (1 Peter, 4:16; Acts, 11:26; Acts, 26:28). Therefore in order to avoid translation inaccuracies and religious misinterpretations, it is preferable to use the

word *hawāriyyūn* for the supporters of ‘Īsá (ﷺ) who stood with him when his people turned against him.

There is a parallel with the life of Muhammad (ﷺ). He also reached a time in his mission when he felt that the established political and religious power structure had turned against him. At the time of the Hajj, he would go to the assemblies of people in Makkah and proclaim, “*Is there a person who will give me refuge that will make it possible for me to communicate my Sustainer’s words? The Qurayshī administration has barred me from that task.*”⁸⁸ And subsequently it was the Yathribī attendees of the Hajj who stepped up and told the Prophet (ﷺ) that “we shall be your supporters and partisans.” Eventually he was forced to leave Makkah and find refuge and support in Yathrib, later to become known as Madinah. Thus Muhammad (ﷺ) was protected, and Islam grew and spread from Madinah where the Islamic ethical standards and principles flourished into social laws and ideological plans of action.

The ideological clash between Jesus (ﷺ) and his enemies was such that his enemies plotted against him. Clearly, had his adversaries been strictly worried about discharging spiritual or ritualistic rites, no one would have been concerned about his “other worldliness.” But in fact, Jesus (ﷺ), like all other prophets (ﷺ), did not seek to detach this world from the next one. The principles of truth, justice, and virtue have to be social and universal, not private and individual. This polarization of positions is described as follows,

And the deniers [of Allah’s power presence] connived [against Jesus], while Allah was planning; but Allah brought their conniving to nothing: for Allah is above all conniving people (3:54).

The term *conspiracy theory* has acquired negative connotations, but conspiracies are a fact of history; and there were conspiracies against most or all of Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ). In this instance, a band of Israelis conspired against Jesus (ﷺ), not only to persecute him, but to kill him. Exerting their weight in the corridors of Roman power, they persuaded the Roman ruler to order the execu-

tion of Jesus (ﷺ). The argument that Jesus (ﷺ) threatened the security and interests of the political and religious authorities of that time may have been convincing. He wanted his people to step out of the Roman power structure and deny it power over a people who are subjects of Allah (ﷻ). He could easily have been suspected of treachery and high treason against the state.

He was also a threat to the Israeli Semitic religious establishment. It is hardly surprising that there were threats and challenges against him. But Allah (ﷻ) nullified all plots and secret plans. Finally the Roman authorities and the Israeli rabbis agreed on the need to do away with Jesus (ﷺ); thus they sent troops to capture him and bring him before a tribunal to be tried and sentenced to death. Here the Christian and Muslim understandings differ. Muslims, according to the faultless information from the Qur'an, hold that when this Roman force reached Jesus' (ﷺ) home, they arrested someone in the image of Jesus (ﷺ), but that Jesus (ﷺ) himself was delivered away from their hands by Allah (ﷻ), to ultimately be raised to the heavens.

Lo Allah said, “O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause you to expire, and shall lift you up unto Me, and cleanse you of [the presence of] those who are bent on denying the truth [of My power], and I shall place those who follow you far above those who are bent on denying the truth, [all the way] to the Day of Resurrection. In the end, unto Me you all must return, and I shall judge between you with regard to all on which you were wont to differ...” (3:55).

Bear in mind that this detailed information was revealed to an Arab in the remote and isolated desert of Arabia. Considering this *āyah*, two understandings may be ascertained. First, Allah (ﷻ) says to 'Īsá (ﷺ), “I will cause you to expire and raise you unto Me and cleanse you of the effects of those who deny Me, and then in the course of time I will cause you to die after you descend from heaven.” This would mean that Jesus (ﷺ) was raised up into the heavens

while he was still alive in both his body and soul. At some time, he will return to complete the long effort to establish God’s “kingdom” on earth. That will be the time when human beings and the natural order achieve a harmonized conformity to Allah’s (ﷻ) authority. There are hadiths to that effect, for example “*Jesus did not die; indeed he will return to you before Resurrection Day.*”⁸⁹ Alternatively we may understand that the death of Jesus (ﷺ) is meant to be an apparent one; and the raising of Jesus (ﷺ) is the elevation of his status. An example of *raf‘* meaning *exaltation* is, **“And call to mind, through this divine Writ, Idrīs. Behold, he was a man of truth, a prophet, whom We exalted onto a lofty station” (19:56–57).** This would mean that Allah (ﷻ) caused Jesus (ﷺ) to actually die; and then after his death, He elevated him in status.

Most people who consider the wording of the *āyah* in its original Arabic agree that what is meant by the word *mutawaffika* is that Allah (ﷻ) will cause Jesus (ﷺ) to “go into a decrease in the manifestation of life.” This is similar to what happens to a person when he goes to sleep; in fact the root word *yatawaffā* means a conscious but not biological withdrawal from life, **“And He it is who causes you to be [like] dead at night...” (6:60);** and also,

It is Allah [alone that has this power — He] who causes all human beings to expire at the time of their [bodily] death, and [causes to be as dead], during their sleep, those that have not yet died... (39:42).

It is also reported on good authority that Muhammad (ﷺ) used to say, upon awakening in the morning, “*Thank Allah who has resurrected us after causing us to pass away.*”⁹⁰

There are other *āyāt* that speak about the purported crucifixion of ‘Īsá (ﷺ) and his being raised up,

However, they did not slay him, and neither did they crucify him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so; and verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no [real] knowl-

edge thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, of a certainty, they did not slay him: rather, Allah exalted him unto Himself — and Allah is indeed Almighty, Wise. Yet there is not one of the followers of earlier revelation who does not, at the moment of his death, grasp the truth about Jesus; and on the Day of Resurrection he [himself] shall bear witness to the truth against them (4:156–159).

From all the information available in the reliable sources of the Qur'an and the Hadith, it is clear that the racist and supremacist Yahūd were determined to get rid of 'Īsá (ﷺ); they would not be satisfied unless he was killed. But Allah's (ﷻ) decision was to protect him and his lofty position in a state of what may be called "spirited life suspension." Allah (ﷻ) honored Jesus (ﷺ) by placing his true followers above those *kāfirs* who opposed him until the Day of Resurrection. In these two parallel strategies toward Jesus (ﷺ), one from his racist and bigoted enemies and the other from Allah (ﷻ), his Maker and Creator, there could be no doubt as to which would prevail,

Lo Allah said, "O Jesus! Confidentially, I shall suspend you from life, and shall exalt you unto Me, and cleanse you of [the presence of] those who are bent on denying the truth [of My power appearance], and I shall place those who follow you above those who are bent on denying the truth, until the Day of Resurrection..." (3:55).

Some people may be curious about how exactly Jesus (ﷺ) was suspended from willful and conscious life, and how he was raised and taken to the company of Allah (ﷻ). These details are withheld from us; we simply have not been given these particulars on what precisely happened. Some people enter into complex speculations on these matters, and even disputations about them, but this achieves nothing. Arguments about such matters and the exact

details of the birth of ‘Īsá (ﷺ), or of this death, generate bad feelings and confused opinions. Even worse, they can only be based on error, and even if perchance some particular understanding happens to be correct, it would be impossible to verify it. Suffice it instead to say that Allah (ﷻ) has the final word on this subject as on all others, and man, who clearly has limited knowledge, should accept both what He says and his ignorance of what He does not say.

“And I shall place those who follow you [far] above those who deny the truth [of My power presence all the way up] to the Day of Resurrection.” This is not difficult to understand. Those who really follow Jesus (ﷺ) are not those who have made a religion out of deifying him, but those who follow him in yielding to Allah (ﷻ) and surrendering to His power and will. This is another way of saying they are “Muslims.” And again there is a parallel to be drawn: *muslims* are not those who have made a religion out of claiming they are the followers of Muhammad (ﷺ); rather *muslims* are those humans who give up resistance and yield to Allah’s (ﷻ) will and force. These types of people will be above those who reject Allah (ﷻ) until the Day of revival from death.

Allah (ﷻ) knows, of course, that this will not be accepted by all people,

And as for those who are bent on denying the truth, I shall cause them to suffer a suffering severe in this world and in the life to come, and they shall have none to support them; whereas to those who are committed and do good works He will grant their reward in full, for Allah does not love offenders (3:56–57).

People have to pay for their stubborn advocacy of fabrications about Jesus (ﷺ) and God. The message Jesus (ﷺ) brought has been lost in the theological confusion and disputations about the nature of Jesus (ﷺ) and the assertions that he is God. These types will suffer severely in this world and in the life to come, and **“they shall have none to support them.”** A relevant hadith is in order here,

I affirm by Allah that Ibn Maryam [the son of Mary] will descend as a just and honorable arbiter. He will break off (shatter) the cross, kill the swine, eliminate the jizyah... Malice, hatred, and rancor will cease. People will be offered money and no one will partake of it.”⁹¹

An Everlasting Challenge Issued to All Christians

This subject matter We convey to you, this tidings full of wisdom. Verily, in the sight of Allah, the nature of Jesus is as the nature of Adam, whom He created out of dust and then said to him, “Be” — and he is. [This is] the truth from your Sustainer; be not, then, among the doubters!

And if anyone should argue with you about this [truth] after all the knowledge that has come to you, say, “Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves; and then let us pray [together] humbly and ardently, and let us invoke Allah’s curse upon those [of us] who are telling a lie.”

Behold, this is indeed the truth of the matter, and there is no deity whatever save Allah; and, verily, Allah — He alone — is Almighty, Truly Wise. And if they turn away [from this truth], behold, Allah has full knowledge of the spreaders of corruption (3:58–63).

When the discussion between the Christian missionaries from Najrān and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) turned critical about the character and “composition” of Jesus (ﷺ), the truthful words of this Qur’an led the disputants to a summons. The Prophet (ﷺ) was instructed to bring the discussion to a conclusion of sorts. The *mufassirs* cite the following exchange between the Christian delegates from Najrān and Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ), beginning with the Christians asking,

“Why do you defame our fellow?” He replied, “But what is it that I am saying that leads you to believe I am defaming him?” They said, “You say he [Jesus] is a subject of God.” He answered, “But of course; he is Allah’s subject, His messenger, and His word set unto the immaculate virgin.” They were angered and retorted, “Have you ever seen a man who has no father? If what you are saying is the truth, then let us see such a man [who has no father].” To this Allah (ﷻ) revealed, **“Verily, in the sight of Allah, the nature of Jesus is as the nature of Adam, whom He created out of soil and then said to him, ‘Be,’ and he is...”**⁹²

This *āyah* also answers a third category of people: those who neither committed themselves to ‘Īsá (ﷺ) and his message, nor denied him and turned against him. These may be called pseudo-Christians; they were affected by the life of ‘Īsá (ﷺ) in a way that moved them to deviate from the truth of his mission. They claimed that if Jesus (ﷺ) was God’s word and spirit, then God must have been in some way incarnated into a human being — referring to Mary (ﷺ) — so that the *logos* was represented in bodily form. They asserted that Jesus (ﷺ) became both a human and a god, having two natures. Allah (ﷻ) responded by clarifying that the creation of ‘Īsá (ﷺ) was no more of a “miracle” than the creation of Adam (ﷺ). If Allah (ﷻ) can create Adam (ﷺ) without biological parents, He certainly can create Jesus (ﷺ) without a biological father. Adam and Eve (ﷺ), mankind’s first father and mother, were miraculously born, but everyone understands the clear distinction between creator and created nonetheless.

The whole point of creating Jesus (ﷺ) in the way he was created is to demonstrate Allah’s (ﷻ) presence in man’s affairs. He says, **“So that We might make him [Jesus] an *āyah* [of Allah’s power presence in human life] to mankind and an act of grace from Us” (19:21)**. This is the truth from our Sustainer. The truth is neither presented by the so-called Christians who say that Jesus (ﷺ) is God, nor by the Jews who infer that Mary (ﷺ) had an affair with Joseph, the carpenter. After these authoritative words from

the Creator no one need have any doubt about this issue. Those who refer and defer to this unalterable Book cannot entertain one iota of doubt about this well-preserved truth.

After this declaration of truth, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), and by implication all Muslims, are commanded to cut through the tangled knots of controversy on the issue by a humble and fervent invocation, known as the *mubāhalah*.

And if anyone should argue with you about this [truth] after all the knowledge that has come to you, say, "Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves; and then let us pray [together] meekly and ardently, and let us invoke Allah's affliction upon those [of us] who are telling a lie [about Jesus]" (3:61).

This is a joint prayer to Allah (ﷻ) to condemn and doom whomever is not saying the truth about Jesus (ﷺ). So Muhammad (ﷺ) challenged the Christian emissaries to join this prayer, but they excused themselves. As is the case with many Christians today, they feared the consequences of accepting the truth: the loss of their status, influence, interests, and position. "It is not worth it" is their attitude.

According to accounts in al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah,

*Muhammad (ﷺ) was visited by al-ʿĀqib [the head and decision-maker of the Christian delegation] and al-Sayyid, who was the foremost scholar of the delegation, which numbered about 60 in total. One of them said to the other, "Do not enter into this mubāhalah with him [Muhammad]. I avow that if he truly is a messenger [from God] and then we pray with him in opposition to him, we will never emerge from this affair in a prosperous way and it may have a toll on our descendants..."*⁹³

When Muhammad (ﷺ) wanted to take the Christians into this *mubāhalah*, he summoned ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, and their two sons

al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. He came out with them and said, “When I pray, you say *āmīn*.”⁹⁴ When the Christian delegation finally decided not to take part in such a common prayer, they settled on being civil constituents of an Islamic authority and paying their dues. If anything, this refusal and subsequent attitude are indicative of the solid moral and factual grounds on which the Muslims stand, and the shaky grounds on which the Christians are on when it comes to the nature of Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ).

What is remarkable is that since this *mubāhalaḥ*, Muslims have not invited Christians to participate in such common prayers. The sorts of interfaith meetings between Muslims and Christians nowadays are characterized by a Muslim inferiority complex that humbly appeals to the so-called Christians to look favorably upon the truth that has come from Allah (ﷻ). The contrast with the attitude of the Prophet (ﷺ), as dictated by Allah’s (ﷻ) revelation, could hardly be greater.

It is also significant that the Prophet (ﷺ) called upon his immediate family for this common invocation. He said concerning al-Ḥasan, “Verily, my son [*al-Ḥasan*] is a *sayyid* [a nobleman].”⁹⁵ There is another hadith that says, “All causality and genealogy will cease on the Day of Resurrection except for mine.”⁹⁶

The Proper Foundation of All Interfaith Exchanges

The *āyah* that follows should serve as the basis of all interfaith conferences and meetings. People of pre-existing scriptures should be summoned to a common understanding. All of us — the children of Adam (ﷺ) — are expected to pledge ourselves to the One God who has no issue, no associate, and no rivals. Humans should also be especially careful not to dominate others or to abuse the limited authority they have been granted. If people of faith and reason cannot come to common terms upon this basis, they are doomed to suffer the consequences. Interfaith dealings need not be polluted with hypocrisy or distorted by concessions of the conscience. Consider again and savor what Allah (ﷻ) has to say,

Say, “O followers of earlier scriptures! Come to the tenet that you and we can hold in common: that we shall conform to none but Allah, and that we shall not attribute divinity [and authority] to anyone beside Him, and that we shall not espouse [human beings as our] lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say, “Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves to Him” (3:64).

In a world riddled with religious controversy, tribal strife, and personal antagonism, this *āyah* is truly awe-inspiring. Even after more than 14 centuries Jews, Christians, and Muslims have not been able to cool their passions, consider their situations objectively and dispassionately, and display the confidence that is required to act by such inviting and soothing words. The Prophet (ﷺ) was not out to dominate followers of other religions; he was not trying to show that the Qur’an is superior to whatever vestiges of the Gospel and the Torah had escaped the assault of arrogant and self-serving misreadings and misinterpretations, despite the fact that the Qur’an succeeds and supersedes them all. What is offered in this *āyah* is a *common understanding* that should not antagonize anyone. This *āyah* states that all adherents of former and current scriptures can be equal. No one religion should consider itself the best while labeling others as substandard. In this scripturally inspired climate, no human being is permitted to claim overlordship, and no human being need be subjugated or subservient. Nothing could possibly be fairer or more equitable; and only those guided by unbridled ego could refuse such a proposition.

These *āyāt* were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), when the Islamic State was limited to a few urban centers in the Arabian peninsula. The authority of Islam was not yet the transcontinental power that it was later to become. But still the first Islamic generation was open-minded and open-hearted enough to hold the first interfaith conference in history between Western and Islamic civilizations. This remarkable episode, which does not even appear in Christian religious literature in any significant way, is at the core of

Islam's conscious life because the words of this Qur'an will be reviewed and recited by the followers of Islam until the last hour.

The first point upon which "Abrahamic" minds should agree is that we humans owe Allah (ﷻ) our loyalty, service, and obedience. No "god of stone" or false allegiance should distract us from this one-to-one relationship between lowly humans and the Supreme God. Even prophets and messengers (ﷺ) are humans who are indebted to Allah (ﷻ) as are all other human beings. Allah (ﷻ) did not intend that we consider His messengers (ﷺ) to be divine.

These are the common points of understanding; all people of faith and scripture should be mature enough to accept them. The One God, Allah (ﷻ), is the source of love and mercy; man is their reflection. Allah (ﷻ) is the source of authority and man is its implementation. From Allah (ﷻ) comes authority and from man comes humility. Out of all this comes equality and justice; who is going to disagree or argue with equality and justice from their divine source? But if some Christians or Jews decide to part company here, they certainly have the freedom to do so, and to that the Muslims say, **"Attest [to the fact] that it is we who have yielded ourselves to Allah."**

From this proposal to the people of earlier scriptures, and its result, we develop a better picture of those who are really true to Allah (ﷻ), and true to their word. We ourselves are required to be involved so that this invitation can be issued whenever there is an interfaith, ecumenical, or multicultural gathering. The whole theme has to do with human obedience and commitment to the authority and power of Allah (ﷻ). No interfaith group discussion should be about conventional Jews, ceremonial Christians, or nominal Muslims. The issue has to do with active respect and functional adaptation to Allah (ﷻ) Himself. A religious name or clerical garb will not do it. It is unfortunate that the English language does not have a word that can precisely convey this meaning, and thus we are constrained to present Muslims as those who *surrender*. But this English word has unfortunate connotations: it is criminals or outlaws who surrender. It should be understood that what counts in this context of the meeting of scriptural minds is that we should

behave in a way that submits or surrenders (yields and conforms) to Allah (ﷻ). Allah (ﷻ) has no synonym, no similar, and no inheritor. In addition to this men are not permitted to claim any of Allah's (ﷻ) authority over other men, rendering these others inferiors or virtual slaves. This human subordination to Allah (ﷻ) is the only psychologically and sociologically healthy relationship that human beings are going to be able to agree upon. Without this, humanity will continue to suffer from inequality, injustice, and exploitation. This is a call to liberation as the soul is liberated from its deviant desires, the mind is liberated from its confusion, and the body is liberated from serfdom. And all this is to be pronounced at an interfaith conclave by Muslims following the precedent of the Prophet (ﷺ), who did precisely this at the first ever Christian-Islamic interfaith conference, in Arabia over 1,400 years ago.

When man says that he is “created in the image of God,” he gives himself a foothold onto divine grounds. And what is this “image of God?” Is it an African bushman? Is it an Australian aborigine? Is it a native American? Or is it the Mongolian? Of course not. This supposed “image of God” is the white European man. Colonialism and imperialism have their roots in this “image of God” mentality. This is another way of claiming a portion of divinity for some humans, who can then go on doing what they like to do best: enslaving and exploiting other humans, who are required to accept and revere this erroneous “image of God.” In this way, faith in God has become simply another way in which some people in this world become “lords” over others. This and similar processes can be found in Western democracies and in Eastern theocracies — anywhere where people refuse to be Muslim in the true sense of the word, which excludes token or nominal Muslims. The accumulation of these arrogant and self-serving values, teachings, indoctrinations, and standards, translated into secular laws, policies, strategies, and paradigms, become the *ṭāghūṭī* establishments and governments that impose their will on the rest of the toiling peoples. These peoples are the ones who are regarded as inferiors and expected to accept this position in the international world order.

Such an oppressive and exploitative arrangement has to be dismantled. The kings and presidents who play God in this way must be relieved of their powers and positions, either peacefully or otherwise, once a critical proportion of humanity captures the spirit of scripture and follows the precedent of the prophets (ﷺ). Few are willing to say it; but these kings and presidents, who revel in playing God, must be brought down from their thrones and toppled from their executive offices. This can only be achieved by a popular movement like the Madinan one that realized these divine instructions during the time of Muhammad (ﷺ). People do not go to temples, churches, synagogues or mosques to “worship” presidents such as Barack Obama, prime ministers such as Bibi Netanyahu, or kings such as Āl Saud, but their daily acceptance of these leaders’ dictates in terms of social, economic, and political life have rendered most Christians, Jews, and Muslims followers and subordinates of these politicians, who evidently cannot be disobeyed.

It is only in an Islamic order that a human can actually be free of this vassalage and thralldom. In an Islamic order, man receives his values and rules from Allah (ﷻ), and only from Allah (ﷻ). Man is honored to be the equal of all other men, as all together stand on an equal footing on the basis of the dignity and status accorded to humanity by Allah (ﷻ). In this reconfiguration of human society, no man or group of men can be permitted to assume the status of a god, announced or unannounced.

This is the vibrant, forceful and fruitful Islam that was pronounced by all the Prophets and Apostles (ﷺ). This is the Islam that liberates and emancipates. This is the Islam that fulfils justice and cancels tyranny. All other pretenses to Islam, necessary and worthy as they may seem — such as being born in a traditional Muslim family, or belonging to a historical Muslim heritage, or having a Muslim name — are peripheral and irrelevant. The real Islam is to live a real life: the life that dwells in individuals, families, and societies alike, structured and functioning with the light that comes from Allah (ﷻ). It is in this sense that Allah (ﷻ) accepts this expression of Islam to be His *dīn*.

Christian and Jewish Antipathy for Yielding to God

- (3:65) O Followers of earlier revelation! Why do you argue about Abraham, seeing that the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till [long] after him? Will you not, then, use your reason?
- (3:66) Lo! You are the ones who would argue about that which is known to you; but why do you argue about something that is unknown to you? Yet Allah knows [it], whereas you do not know.
- (3:67) Abraham was neither a “Jew” nor a “Christian,” but was one who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself to Allah; and he was not of those who ascribe divinity to any beside Him.
- (3:68) Behold, the people who have the best claim to Abraham are surely those who follow him — as do this Prophet and all who are committed [to Him] — and Allah is the authority of the committed [Muslims].
- (3:69) Some of the followers of earlier revelation would love to lead you astray; yet none do they lead astray but themselves, and they perceive it not.
- (3:70) O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you deny the truth of Allah’s [power] manifestations [and presence] to which you yourselves bear witness?
- (3:71) O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you cloak the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth of which you are [so well] aware?
- (3:72) And some of the followers of earlier revelation say [to one another], “Declare your belief in what has been revealed to those who believe [in Muhammad] at the beginning of the day, and deny the truth of what came later, so that they might go back [on their faith];
- (3:73) “But do not [really] believe anyone who does not follow your own faith.” Say, “Behold, all [true] guidance is Allah’s guidance, consisting in one’s being granted [revelation] such as you have been granted.” Or would they con-

يَتَّاهِلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّورَةُ
وَالْإِنْجِيلُ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ هَتَانِمْ هَتُولَاءِ
حَجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا
وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ إِنَّ أَوْلَى
النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَدَّتْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوكُمْ وَمَا
يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ يَتَّاهِلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ
تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ يَتَّاهِلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ
تَلْبُسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَقَالَتْ
طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ءَامِنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَجَهُ
النَّهَارِ وَكُفِّرُوا ءَاخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَنْ تَبِعَ
دِينَكُمْ قُلْ إِنْ أَلْهَىٰ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ أَن يُوْتِيَ أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيْتُمْ أَوْ
يُحَاجُّوكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ قُلْ إِنْ أَلْفَضَلَ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَسِعَ
عِلْمُهُ ﴿٧٣﴾ يَخْنُصُ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

﴿٧٤﴾ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِقِنطَارٍ يُودِّهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ
 مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنَهُ بِدِينَارٍ لَا يُودِّهِ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمْتَ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا ذَلِكَ
 بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّيَّتِنِ سَبِيلٌ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ
 وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ بَلَى مَنْ أَوْفَى بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَى فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ
 ﴿٧٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَئِكَ لَا
 خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ
 الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ
 لَفَرِيقًا يَلُؤْنَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ
 مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
 وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ
 اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ثُمَّ يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي
 مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّيْنَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا
 كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَلَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ أَرْبَابًا
 أَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكَفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ
 لَمَّا آتَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ

لَمَّا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِءَ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ ۚ قَالَ ءَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ
إِصْرِي ۗ قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا ۖ وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ فَمَنْ
تَوَلَّىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰلسِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ أَفَغَيَّرَ دِينَ اللَّهِ
يَجْعُونَ وَلَهُ ءَأَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا
وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ ءَأَمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ
عَلَىٰ إِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَإِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا
أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيِّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ
وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ
مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ قَوْمًا
كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمٰنِهِمْ وَشٰهَدُوا أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ حَقٌّ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ أَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ
لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلٰئِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ
عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ
وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمٰنِهِمْ
ثُمَّ أزدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَّن نُّقَبِّلَ تَوْبَتَهُمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الضَّٰلُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلْءٌ
 الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَى بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ
 نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ لَنْ نَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ
 شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٢﴾

tend against you before your Sustainer? Say, “Behold, all bounty is in the hand of Allah; He grants it to whom He wills, for Allah is Infinite, All-Knowing,

- (3:74) He singles out for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is limitless in His great bounty.
- (3:75) And among the followers of earlier revelation there is many a one who, if you entrust him with a treasure, will [faithfully] restore it to you; and there is among them many a one who, if you entrust him with a tiny gold coin, will not restore it to you unless you keep standing over him — which is an outcome of their assertion, “No blame can attach to us [for anything that we may do] with regard to these unlettered folk.” And [so] they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware [that it is a lie].
- (3:76) No, but [Allah is aware of] those who keep their bond with Him, and are conscious of Him, and, verily, Allah loves those who are aware of His power presence.
- (3:77) Behold, [as for] those who barter away their bond with Allah and their own pledges for a trifling gain, they shall not partake of the blessings of the life to come; and Allah will neither speak to them nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them [of their sins]. And grievous suffering awaits them.

- (3:78) And, behold, there are indeed some among them who distort the Bible with their tongues, so as to make you think that [what they say] is from the Bible, although it is not from the Bible; and who say, “This is from Allah,” although it is not from Allah. And thus do they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware [that it is a lie].
- (3:79) It is not conceivable that a human being unto whom Allah had granted revelation, and sound judgment, and prophethood, should thereafter have said to people, “Conform unto me beside Allah;” but rather [did he exhort them], “Become men of the Lord by spreading the knowledge of the divine Writ, and by your own deep study [thereof].”
- (3:80) And nor did he bid you to take the angels and the prophets for your lords; [for] would he bid you to deny the truth after you have surrendered yourselves unto Allah?
- (3:81) And, lo, Allah accepted, through the prophets, this solemn pledge [from the followers of earlier revelation], “If, after all the revelation and the wisdom which I have vouchsafed unto you, there comes to you an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must commit to him and support him. Do you,” said He, “acknowledge and accept My bond on this condition?” They answered, “We do acknowledge it.” Said He, “Then bear witness [thereto], and I shall be your witness.
- (3:82) “And, henceforth, all who turn away [from this pledge] — it is they, they who are truly iniquitous!”
- (3:83) Do they seek, perchance, a *dīn* [law, ethical code] other than Allah’s, although it is unto Him that whatever is in the heavens and on earth surrenders itself, willingly or unwillingly, since unto Him all must return?
- (3:84) Say, “We are committed to Allah, and to that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and to that which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and to that which has been vouchsafed by their Sustainer unto Moses and

Jesus and all the [other] prophets: we do not discriminate among them. And unto Him do we surrender ourselves.”

- (3:85) For, if one goes in search of a *dīn* other than self-surrender [unto Allah], it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost.
- (3:86) How would Allah bestow His guidance upon people who have resolved to deny the truth after having attained a covenant, and having borne witness that this Apostle is true, and [after] all evidence of the truth has come unto them? For, Allah does not guide such evildoing folk.
- (3:87) Their requital shall be rejection by Allah, and by the angels, and by all [righteous] men.
- (3:88) In this state shall they abide; [and] neither will their suffering be lightened, nor will they be granted respite.
- (3:89) But excepted shall be they that afterwards repent and put themselves to rights, for, behold, Allah is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Grace.
- (3:90) Verily, as for those who are bent on denying the truth after being committed to Allah, and then grow [ever more stubborn] in their refusal to acknowledge the truth, their repentance [of other sins] shall not be accepted: for it is they who have truly gone astray.
- (3:91) Verily, as for those who are bent on denying the truth and die as deniers of the truth, not all the gold on earth could ever be their ransom. It is they for whom grievous suffering is in store; and they shall have none to support them.
- (3:92) [But as for you, who are committed to Allah], never shall you attain to true virtue unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves; and whatever you spend — verily, Allah has full knowledge thereof (Āl ‘Imrān:65–92).

It appears that this stretch of *āyāt* is a follow-up to the previous discussion on the nature of an interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians in particular. Penetrating deeper than the open discussion between the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Christian delegation that was well-received in Madinah by the Muslims, this next section

goes into the type of psychology and mental attitude that informs the behavior of those who say they are following earlier scriptures. And as the Muslims receive more unpolluted information from Allah (ﷻ), they begin to see that Christian and Jewish doctrinal positions have a hierarchical interest in “keeping their distance” from Islam. It is not hard to see that the religious chain of command among Christians and Jews has given in to worldly interests represented by nominally religious and wholly secular officials and politicians who spare no effort in devising tricks and gimmicks to confuse what is right from what is wrong. Today, any decent human being who embarks on a rational and sincere effort to ascertain the “theological” and “historical” truth about the Christian and Jewish position concerning God will in a short time find himself in a field of conflicting and combustible information.

What is clear though is that the historical and official Jewish and Christian position toward people who have made a conscious choice to make Islam their beacon is one that is characterized by a state of deep-seated ill will and discord. Islam and Muslims can never attain a mainstream and acceptable position within the internal thoughts of the Church or the Jewish rabbinical councils. Pope Benedict XVI has insinuated as much when he voiced his opposition to the admission of Turkey into the European Union.⁹⁷ It is because of this well established fact that the words of Allah (ﷻ) come to the rescue and show Muslims the way.

Muslims who view the Qur’an as their guiding instrument in life cannot help but realize that this concluding Scripture stands for the truth and all other inheritors of partial scriptures prove they stand for false statements, false belief, and thus false honesty. Their attitudes, their manners, their acts, and their intentions are documented since that time in such a way that it parallels precisely their current behavior. In their convenient adoption of sketchy scripture they nurse a dislike for Muslims; they hide their true selves behind a veneer of holy writ and the Bible. Any student of the Qur’an should be able to say with certitude that when it comes to Christians and Jews and their common approach to God, they are on shaky foundations of truth. And this statement should be

uttered by Muslims in humility and meekness for the purpose of providing guidance, and not to acquire a distinction by virtue of belonging to the “best religion.”

The first round begins by confronting the Jews and the Christians with the truth about Abraham (ﷺ). In an effort to legitimize their religious racism or their racist religion, they make silly claims and counter-claims of Abraham (ﷺ) being a Christian or a Jew. Abraham (ﷺ) preceded Judaism and Christianity; he lived many centuries before the Gospel and the Torah were revealed. If Christians and Jews want to argue this matter they will always sound clumsy and ludicrous. Allah (ﷻ) states for the record that Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) surrendered himself to Allah (ﷻ); that is, he was a *muslim* in the generic sense, not in the sense that he belonged to a particular orthodoxy. This would bring Abraham (ﷺ) into the mainstream of the history of prophets, all of whom surrendered their lives to Allah (ﷻ) and dedicated their efforts to His will. Self-surrender to the power and Will of Allah (ﷻ) — which is the linguistic meaning of the word *islam* — becomes the common denominator that brings together all prophets and all humans who yield to Allah (ﷻ). Therefore, “...those who may claim an affinity with Abraham are surely those who follow him — as does this Prophet [Muhammad] and all who are divinely committed [to Allah] — and Allah is the authority of the committed [Muslims].”

The Qur’an does not stop there. It goes into the reason why some pseudo-scripturalists argue with the Muslims about Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and other issues: it is their hidden desire to see the Muslims lose sight of the facts and eventually go off course the same way the Christians and Jews earlier went off course. Allah’s (ﷻ) words go directly to these psychologically disturbed Christians and Jews,

O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you deny the truth about Allah’s power manifestations [and presence] to which you yourselves are witnesses? O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you mask the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth of which you are [so well] aware? (3:70–71).

Failing in their overt intellectual efforts to divert the Muslims away from society’s vanguard position, the same people, Allah (ﷻ) tells us, are willing to resort to more devious and nefarious tactics: they are willing to change religion on the spin of a coin. Taking advantage of their position as those who were historically attuned to scripture and the impact that would have on the choices of the unsure ones who would adhere to the new scripture, they were willing to confuse the newcomers by professing an attachment to Allah (ﷻ), the Qur’an, and Muhammad (ﷺ) in the daytime, and then renouncing it in the evening. This had and continues to have an impact as many of them are learned, educated, and even scholarly,

And a consistency of biblical people say [to one another], “Declare your commitment to that which has been revealed to the committed Muslims at the beginning of the day, and deny the truth of it later [in the day], so that they [the Muslims] might abdicate [their *dīn*] (3:72).

The Qur’an then moves on to compare the morals and mannerisms of those whose acts spring from a certain knowledge of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence,

No, but [Allah is aware of] those who keep their bond with Him, and are conscious of Him [and His earthly power], and, verily, Allah loves those who are alert to His power presence (3:76).

to those whose religious and ideological antipathy for Muslims has led them to rationalize deceit and dishonesty,

And among the followers of earlier revelation there is many a one who, if you entrust him with a stash of wealth, will [faithfully] return it to you; and there is among them many a one who, if you entrust him with a tiny gold coin, will not return it to you unless you keep standing over him — which is a consequence of

their assertion, “We are not to blame [for anything that we may do] with regard to these gentiles.” And [so] they tell a lie about Allah, knowing very well [that it is a lie] (3:75).

No revealed scripture will ever sanction fraud, trickery, and treachery to secure the acquisition and possession of ill-gotten material gains. The only way to rationalize such practices is to change Allah’s (ﷻ) revealed word and then claim that the new words are Allah’s (ﷻ) words. Unfortunately, in their brazenly rejectionist history, these materialistic and atheistic scripturalists have shown they will have no difficulty in twisting and torturing God’s words to justify their worldly gains, business objectives, and margins of profit,

And, behold, there are indeed some among them who distort the Bible with their tongues, so as to make you think that [what they say] is from the Bible, the while it is not from the Bible; and who say, “This is from Allah,” the while it is not from Allah. And thus do they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware [that it is a lie] (3:78).

Finally Allah (ﷻ) establishes the fact that the history of prophets (ﷺ) is a continuum. Every prophet was reinforcing and upgrading the essential message that all of them shared,

And, lo, Allah accepted, through the prophets, this solemn pledge [from the followers of earlier revelation], “If, after all the revelation and the wisdom which I have vouchsafed to you, there comes to you an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must commit to him and support him. “Do you” — said He — “acknowledge and accept My bond on this condition?” They answered, “We do acknowledge it.” Said He, “Then bear witness [thereto], and I shall be your witness” (3:81).

Therefore, it becomes an obligation upon Christians and Jews to consider and acknowledge the mission of the final prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), and to support him. For to break with Muhammad (ﷺ) is to break away from the historical continuum of prophets, of which Jesus and Moses (ﷺ) are a part. And they have broken with the line and the essential mission of prophets (ﷺ). When people decide they want nothing to do with Islam they in fact place themselves not only in opposition to Islam but in opposition to the way life and the world are run by Allah (ﷻ), **“Do they seek, perhaps, a *dīn*, other than Allah’s, although it is unto Him that whatever is in the heavens and on earth surrenders itself, willingly or unwillingly, since unto Him all must return?”** These people of previous scripture not only divert from Islam, Allah’s (ﷻ) social order, they also inevitably clash with Allah’s (ﷻ) natural order.

The Jews and Christians Do Not Own Ibrāhīm (ﷺ)

O followers of earlier scriptures [Jews and Christians]! Why do you argue about Abraham, seeing that the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till [long] after him? Will you not, then, use your reason? Lo! You are the ones who would argue about what is known to you; but why do you argue about something that is unknown to you? Yet Allah knows [it], whereas you do not know; Abraham was neither a “Jew” nor a “Christian,” but was one who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself to Allah; and he was not of those who ascribe divinity to any beside Him (3:65–67).

According to Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, who is reported to have said, “The Christians of Najrān and the Jewish rabbis convened in the presence of Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ). They disputed some issues in his presence. The rabbis said, ‘But Abraham was none other than a Jew.’ And the Christians said, ‘He

was certainly a Christian.’ Within this context Allah (ﷻ) brought out the truth of the matter in these *āyāt*.⁹⁸

Behold, the people who have the best claim to Abraham are surely those who follow him — as does this Prophet and all who are committed [to Him] — and Allah is the authority of the committed [Muslims] (3:68).

It has been recorded that the Jews were asked about Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). Their response was, “We affirm [Abraham] by God, O Muhammad! You know we are more entitled to Abraham’s religion than you are, and more than anyone else for that matter. Obviously, Abraham was a Jew. You [Muhammad] feel envious about this whole matter.”⁹⁹ In response to this exchange, Allah (ﷻ) declared the truth in the *āyah* above. Muhammad (ﷺ) said,

*“Indeed, each prophet feels an affinity to a series of allied prophets. In truth, my ally as prophet is my father and the intimate (khalīl) of my Sustainer;” and then he read, “Behold, the people who have the best claim to Abraham are surely those who follow him — as does this Prophet...”*¹⁰⁰

The Jews came to meet the Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) while the Christian delegation was in town. This may have been an attempt by the Jews to team up with the Christians against Muhammad (ﷺ). However, nothing significant came out of this potential partnership among historical representatives of scripture.

The subject matter of these narratives suggests that Jews, Christians, and Muslims met together in an interfaith forum to frankly discuss issues pertinent to their beliefs and convictions. This is yet further evidence of the fact that Muslims can be leaders and trendsetters in convening such interfaith meetings. Muslims should have their hearts and minds open to the Qur’an when they encounter Christians and Jews for a dialogue. The precedent is here, and the Muslims should follow. If Christians and Jews are

reluctant to meet on these terms, that is their problem. We should have no problem as the Qur'an is the authority on this subject. And when the Qur'an is in Muslim hearts and minds, their confidence can be unlimited.

The instructions in this Qur'anic discourse combine the oneness of Allah's (ﷻ) divinity — that we conform unto none except Allah (ﷻ) — with the oneness of His authority — that none of us should become lords beside Allah (ﷻ) over others. This statement encapsulates the essence of Allah's (ﷻ) guidance to mankind. Other *āyāt* reiterate this historical religious doctrine with the following words,

Before your time, We never sent any apostle without revealing to him that there is no deity save Me, [and that] therefore you shall conform to Me [alone] (21:25).

And indeed, within every community have We raised up an apostle [entrusted with this message]: conform unto Allah, and shun the powers of evil! (16:36).

On one level these *āyāt* show that the Christians and Jews came to Allah's Prophet (ﷺ) to discuss what we now call theological or doctrinal issues, and that the Prophet (ﷺ) was receptive. There is no indication that he discouraged them from living with Muslims or discouraged Muslims from having dealings with them.

Another element of the interfaith principle is also given in the *āyah*, “**that none of us shall lord over each other...**,” which addresses the issue of denying power structures in the world the role of overlordship above other, less powerful, or dispossessed, peoples of the world. So, from an Islamic perspective, an interfaith dialogue cannot be limited to strictly “religious” issues. Human life is a package; and it has to be sorted out as a package. In this regard if we are to be honest with each other we have to deal with the real issues and problems among us, including the abuse of authority and power by parties that seek to reduce other people to positions of obedience and serfdom. This issue is explained further in another incident,

*‘Adī ibn Ḥātīm came to Allah’s Messenger with a cross of gold on his neck. Allah’s Messenger told him, “Toss away [and relieve yourself of] this graven image.” Then ‘Adī said, I heard him recite from Sūrah Barā’ah [al-Tawbah], “They have taken their rabbis and their monks — as well as the Christ, son of Mary — for their lords beside Allah...” (9:31). And I said to him, “O messenger of Allah! They did not worship them.” He replied, “Did they [the rabbis and the monks] not authorize what is lawful and what is unlawful? And did you not accept their findings?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “And in such a way they conformed to these religious figures instead of conforming unto Allah.”*¹⁰¹

On another level Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) took his interfaith message to the rulers of the time. He communicated the historically uniform message of Allah (ﷻ) and the previous prophets (ﷺ) to all the surrounding potentates, among them the king of Persia, the Byzantine king, the Negus of Abyssinia and the ruler in Egypt. An example of this is the letter he sent to the Roman emperor,

In the Name of Allah, the Mercy-Giving, the Merciful.

From Muhammad, Allah’s Messenger, to Heraclius the preeminent of the Byzantines.

*Peace be upon he who abides by [Allah’s] guidance... I summon you with the word of advice in Islam; if you surrender to Allah you will be safe. And if you do so Allah will reward you in a twofold manner. But if you turn away then you will bear the burden and onus of the general population [over whom you rule].*¹⁰²

At this juncture, looking into what the Jewish and Christian mind understands about Abraham (ﷺ) would be instructive. In the Torah and the Bible, Abraham’s (ﷺ) story (Genesis, 11:27–25:18) derives from disparate traditions that have been conflated into a semblance of biographical integrity. The Jews and Christians cannot agree on the identity of his hometown. Some say Haran, a

northern Mesopotamian city, while others say Ur, an ancient Babylonian city south of Haran.¹⁰³ The same Jewish and Christian perspective on Abraham (ﷺ) records that Yahweh (God) commanded Abraham (ﷺ) to abandon his country and kindred, and move to a destination, later to be identified. The Deity also promised a great nation, which would richly benefit humankind, would emerge from Abraham (ﷺ). When the obedient Abraham (ﷺ) reached Shechem, an ancient town in Palestine, Yahweh pledged, “To your descendants I will give this land.” Abraham (ﷺ), it is said, responded faithfully by erecting an altar. Yet in an emergency sojourn to Egypt, he implicitly questioned the promise of divine protection. To guarantee his own security, he “fabricated a lie about his wife Sarah.”

Then, despairing that Yahweh had abandoned the promise of progeny, Abraham (ﷺ) and Sarah hastened to actualize its fulfillment through Sarah’s maid Hagar (Genesis, 16:2, 4–6). The outcome was unexpected: Sarah became jealous and Hagar was sent away. Yahweh’s mysterious visit to Abraham (ﷺ) and Sarah at Mamre, near the modern city of al-Khalil (Hebron), and restatement of the promise evoked doubt in Sarah (Genesis, 18); for his remaining faithful, Yahweh is said to have confided to Abraham (ﷺ) His intention to destroy Sodom. This enabled the patriarch to intercede on behalf of non-Israelites (affirming the promise of Genesis, 12:2–3). Ultimately Sarah bore Isaac (ﷺ), and when it was time for this “child of promise” to marry, Abraham (ﷺ) acted faithfully by sending his chief steward to obtain a suitable, “non-Canaanite” wife for Isaac among his kinfolk in Haran, thereby sparing Isaac (ﷺ) the necessity of vacating the “Land of Promise” (Genesis, 24).

This is a broad outline of Jewish and Christian history in so far as it pertains to the great patriarch, Abraham (ﷺ). Notice that most of it centers around a bloodline relationship with Abraham (ﷺ) — Abraham (ﷺ) is the genetic father of the faithful. Thus Abraham (ﷺ) has been linked *exclusively* to his progeny, the Children of Israel. Contrast that with the Islamic concept of affiliation with Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) — an affiliation of behavior, orientation, and common commitment. From this obvious contrast of interpre-

tations, the Jews and Christians appear to be legitimizing their authoritarian power position by claiming they inherit it from Abraham (ﷺ). From this argument follows how religion is subverted by the idea of race and how Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) is claimed by Jews and Christians through their alleged racial connection with him, instead of through the historical commitment to Allah (ﷻ) that binds all prophets (ﷺ) and their committed followers. The Jews and Christians come to the interfaith table with a monopolistic argument, that Abraham (ﷺ) belongs to them exclusively. Muslims come to the interfaith table with an open-ended invitation: Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) belongs to all the peoples in the world throughout time who willingly submit themselves in obedience to the will and power of Allah (ﷻ). On details too, there are differences; Muslims can never accept that Abraham (ﷺ) was legitimately married only to Sarah, and had a lesser relationship with Hagar. Ismā'il and Ishāq (ﷺ) both are equal sons of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and they are in the same sense equal brothers.

On the interfaith round table the Jews and Christians have partial and fragmentary information about Moses and Jesus (ﷺ) and they fill in the blanks with personal experiences that serve their national interests. Muslims are fortunate enough to have the final word on all prophets (ﷺ), uncolored by the racism and nationalism that have been factored into others' scriptures,

Lo! You [Jews and Christians] are the ones who would argue about something which is [in part] known to you [the lives of Moses and Jesus]; but why do you argue about something that is unknown to you [the life of Abraham]? (3:66).

The Jews and Christians bring their arguments and disputes to the interfaith session and also take issue with other aspects of scripture. But then they leave this interfaith congregation with a sense that they will never be able to convince the Muslims of their point of view. How can anyone convince Qur'anic Muslims of the Jewish or Christian point of view when the Qur'an is the defini-

tive and authoritative resolution of all such issues? Their argument about Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) does not hold water. They approach the issue of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) either with a sense of racist supremacy, in the case of the Jews, or with a sense of religious imperialism, in the case of the Christians.

Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was an independent Muslim. Implicit in Allah’s (ﷻ) response to the Jews and Christians is that their attitude borders on *shirk*; this is to say that in their minds they have imposed on God a rival or a competitor who does not exist except in their warped imaginations. The affirmation of Allah’s (ﷻ) sole divinity and authority (*tawhīd*) conflicts with the assertion of a God who is matched by other god-figures or who is contested by other authority figures. These are the real issues that are at stake when Muslims and peoples of prior scriptures come to a meeting of ideas and feelings.

When the image of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) is cleansed of all racist allegations and religious arguments that are subservient to political and commercial interests, when the figure of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) is not tarnished by Israeli Zionism or Christian imperialism, then we — the human race — will all have equal access to Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) legacy. Only then can we put an end to these blasphemous abuses of Abraham (ﷺ) and all attempts to monopolize him. The fact has to be established in all ecumenical and interfaith dialogues that all human beings can be affiliated with Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) by means of the divine covenant, scriptural continuity, a common prophetic history, and similar and standardized codes of honorable behavior and moral effort. It is the practice of allegiance and obedience to the One God that unites those who aspire to be the people of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), and not the ancestral blood that runs “in the family.” It is precisely this point that has never been resolved at interfaith conferences because those who claim they surrender unto Allah (ﷻ) are unable to resist surrendering before those who rebel against Allah (ﷻ) and project themselves as His rivals on earth. The only common denominator that can bind all humanity together is common faith and practice, consistent belief and programs of action, and the joint teachings and methods that are the legacy of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ).

With this in mind the succeeding *āyah* is self-explanatory,

Behold, the people who have the best claim to Ibrāhīm are surely those who follow him — as does this Prophet [Muhammad] and all who are committed [to Allah] — and Allah is the authority of the committed [Muslims] (3:68).

This is a lesson to all racist bigots and people with tribalistic or nationalistic tendencies: the people who are most entitled to claim affiliation with Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) are surely those who follow him — not those who merely claim they look like him. The important thing is for people to cast their efforts and deeds in the mold of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), not for them to prove their ancestry from his bloodline. His real family are those whose faith, work, and deeds emulate his, not those who are from his physical seed. It is the act of acknowledging and surrendering to Allah (ﷻ) that overrides all racial and ancestral considerations. It is true, as it happens, that Muhammad (ﷺ) was a lineal descendant of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ), but that is not the basis for the Muslims' affiliation of the last Prophet with Ibrāhīm (ﷺ); they link him with Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) because of their common beliefs, their similar struggles, and their unqualified, unre-served trust and confidence in Allah (ﷻ). This makes it easy for all other peoples and races in the world to join with Ibrāhīm, Muhammad (ﷺ), and the faithfully committed procession of Muslims throughout the course of time. This becomes a family of dedicated *khalifaḥs* (trustees). Their scripture-based vision trumps any deviation from this norm. This family of loyal, committed Muslims becomes an *ummaḥ* that maintains its system of beliefs and priorities through the turbulent course of human history, by means of the Qur'an. The political worldview of this post-racial and post-national fraternity transcends such artificial and secular distinctions as nation-states, tribalism, racism, ethnic origin, and culture.

This *āyah* shows how we humans, regardless of the color of our skins and the languages of our ancestors, can be distinguished from the laws of the jungle. This is proof positive that we can bypass our

secondary identities and find common purpose with those who share our worldview, our political faith, our beliefs, and our hopes. It is this body of ideas flowing forth from scripture that binds us to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and with all like-minded people who, by their own choice, may choose to belong or not to belong. Freedom gains a post-racial horizon. Freedom becomes a universal choice, no longer bound by race or confined by blood lineage. Human beings cannot change their race, color, or ethnic identity, even if they wanted to. So it is a conflict with Allah's (ﷻ) will to consider one race special, or chosen, or exceptional. Even language cannot be a universal basis for brotherhood and consolidation of human societies — most peoples could not change their mother tongue even if they wanted to. The bulk of secular and modern ideas are a barrier to real fraternal human society because they are in conflict with the “ethos” of scripture that seeks to bind humanity together on the basis of *imān*.

How can this be squared with the term *people of God*, often used in both the Old and the New Testaments? Indeed it is one of the several links that connect the Jewish religion and the Christian faith with a common ancestry. The root idea of *people of God* in the Jewish and Christian literature is twofold, suggesting the interrelation of divine promise and a human covenant community. The relationship between God and Israel is unequal since God is their Lord. Hence God's promises have a covenantal character, and are based on the divine nature as trustworthy (Psalms, 12:6); they are not empty words (Isaiah, 55:11). That God fulfills promises is a basic element in Hebrew religion (1 Kings, 8:15), seen in God's redemption of Israel from slavery and all later enemies (Luke, 1:46–55). The building of Solomon's Temple is often referred to as a sign of God's faithfulness in making good His promises (2 Samuel, 3:18; 2 Samuel, 7:13; 1 Kings, 8:20, 56), chiefly because it confirmed the initial promise of God to create a people who would be installed in a land, the “Land of Promise” (Genesis, 17:8). God is thus praised for bringing Israel to its destiny in Canaan, with Jerusalem and its Temple as the focal point.

God's promise to Abraham (ﷺ), in the misguided thinking of most Jews and Christians (Genesis, 12:1–3), centered on the rise of

a race to whom the promise of both nationhood and a special relationship with Yahweh were promised. Yahweh calls them *my people* (Isaiah, 51:4; Zephaniah, 2:9). The self-designation of Israel as *God's people* (2 Samuel, 14:13) implies that they belong — exclusively, as interpreted by Jewish extremists — to God (Deuteronomy, 14:2; 26:18) and are *God's possession* (Deuteronomy, 4:20). The classic passage in which this is described, with its themes of election (choice), calling, and God's free love for Israel, is

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deuteronomy, 7:6–8, New International Version).

All these terms underlie the covenant that God initiated and Israel accepted, under the direction of Moses (ﷺ). But unfortunately there was infidelity on Israel's part (Jeremiah, 31:31–34), leading to the inauguration of a “new covenant” (2 Corinthians, 3; Hebrews, 8), and a fresh focus placed on the concept of the *people of God* (1 Peter, 2:1–10). Such racial, if not racist, understandings of prophets (ﷺ) and scripture have been the basis for conflict ever since, and have become one of the main impediments to justice and equality in our time.

So Allah (ﷻ), who created human nature, apprises readers of the final Testament, the Qur'an, of the duplicity and sophism of a segment of people who call themselves Christians or Jews. The words of Allah (ﷻ) reveal their chicanery and machinations so that all others can see who these people really are. The trickery and guile of these supposed “Christians” and “Jews” dwell deep under

layers of pretense and hypocrisy. But the words of the Qur’an cut through this disguise and expose their true character.

Christian and Jewish Jealousy of the New Covenant Bearers

A faction belonging to people of prior scriptures would love to lead you astray; yet none do they lead astray but themselves, and perceive it not. O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you deny the truth of Allah’s power manifestations [and presence] to which you yourselves bear witness? O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you cloak the truth with falsehood and hide the truth of which you are [so well] aware?

And a faction of the followers of earlier scripture say [to one another], “Declare your belief in what has been revealed to the committed Muslims at the beginning of the day, and deny the truth of what came at the end of the day, so that they [the Muslims] might abdicate [their faith]; but do not [really] believe anyone who does not follow your own *dīn*.”

Say, “Behold, all [true] guidance is Allah’s guidance, consisting in one’s being granted [revelation] such as you have been granted.” Or would they contend against you before your Sustainer? Say, “Behold, all bounty is in the hand of Allah; He grants it to whom He wills, for Allah is Infinite, All-Knowing, singling out for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is limitless in His great bounty (3:69–74).

The core problem that people of previous scripture have with the covenant-bearing Muslims has to do with the ethical teachings and political orientations based on Allah’s (ﷻ) Book and the example of His Prophet (ﷺ). They have a visceral fear of and hatred for an *ummah* that is solidly anchored in the Qur’an and strongly moving forward. While most Muslims, especially in the past two centuries,

were busy neglecting their God-given responsibilities, the Jews and Christians — who monitor the Islamic condition closely — have been able to dissemble and disguise their resentment. But now that a few dedicated Muslims have begun to show they are serious, confident, and certain about their duty and mission, Allah’s (ﷻ) timely words are once again giving striving Muslims confidence. These Jews and Christians simply cannot countenance dutiful Muslims who have the courage and the faith to step out of the secular world that has been imposed on them.

There is something perverse about preferring to be wrong; there is a jaded psychology affecting the attitudes of people who cannot reconcile themselves to their Lord’s truth, and it turns into a foolish passion that has lasting effects, especially when the humans involved are clad in religious garb and hiding behind a pretended affiliation with scripture. “Jews” and “Christians” who listen to God’s refined words coming from the mouths of Muslims, and then consider their own theological and philosophical positions, react to the unfavorable comparison by lashing out at those whose faith is greater and more sincere than their own. So their stubbornness turns into arguments and confrontation; these arguments generate bad feelings and bitterness toward the Muslims who are trying to put Allah’s (ﷻ) word into human dealings at every level.

Muslims themselves should also be very careful with the word of truth, with the word of authority, and with the word of Allah (ﷻ). Allah’s (ﷻ) words are so powerful and so true that they have the potential to provoke negative feelings and a destructive counter-reaction in vacillating human beings. This is especially so when Muslims impose their feelings and ideas on Allah’s (ﷻ) truth. That is why Muslims should handle Allah’s (ﷻ) words in the same way a surgeon handles his instruments. A surgeon cannot work as a plumber works, and a Muslim must be similarly careful and sensitive in his handling of the truth of Islam. Simplistic emotionalism and broadly-drawn crudities have no place in our understanding and exposition of divine truth.

The meanings of this lesson, however, pertain to the Prophet (ﷺ) himself, and he was as refined as a human being can be when

communicating Allah’s (ﷻ) true statements to the Jews and the Christians; yet still they responded with displeasure and antipathy. These time-tested reactions of people who are supposed to be steeped in scripture can be attributed to their avarice, envy, and selfishness. They were obviously on no sound moral basis for the way they behaved with inclusive and inviting Muslims. The fact is that these offending Jews and Christians are deceiving themselves, even as they are trying to deceive Muslims. There is an age-long attitude that “you are either with us or against us” or, to put it another way, that “the truth is either ours or yours.” Why can the truth not be for everyone? **“Yet none do they mislead except themselves, and they perceive it not.”**

As long as Muslims are in Allah’s (ﷻ) service, they have nothing to fear from Jewish and Christian shenanigans and mischief-making disguised as interfaith overtures that are designed to disarm Muslims while Christian imperial executives and Israeli Zionist generals continue to routinely and ruthlessly pummel grassroots Islamic self-determination efforts.

O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you deny the truth of Allah’s power manifestations [and power presence] to which you yourselves have been privy? O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you gloss over the truth with falsehood and obscure the truth of which you are [so well] aware? (3:70–71).

These Jews and Christians have, since the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) and before, been familiar with Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and divinity, and His power and mercy presence in human matters. This Islamic *dīn* represents these well-established facts beyond any doubt. They know this because it is stated in the preceding scriptures: in the Torah and in the Injil. Some of them, before the time of Muhammad (ﷺ), and even during his life and mission, stated as much to their own public. Their difficulty is not in recognizing the truth represented by Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Qur’an, but in not being able to bear any form of truth that encourages its adherents to

establish a model of how mutual human dealings and attachment to God can be for the benefit of all mankind. This commitment of the Muslims is kindled by the words of Allah (ﷻ), a task that the scriptures mutilated by Jews and Christians are unable to accomplish. So, just because they cannot occupy the leadership positions after disqualifying themselves, they turn to rejection and denial, and they do so in the presence of this Qur’anic evidence and the evidence of other scriptures.

Muslims should not delude themselves that Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Qur’an are insufficient proof of the truth of Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance. We Muslims have to go wherever the facts lead us. And the facts tell us that the Jews and Christians do not lack knowledge; it is always their personal privileges, their racist priorities, and their national interests that prevent them from yielding to Allah (ﷻ). This Qur’an uses the best words to appeal to their goodness — what is left of it — when it addresses them honorably, **“O folks of scripture!”** This is not Allah (ﷻ) begging them to believe and it is not Muslims beseeching them to have faith. These words are intended to appeal to whatever faith they have in them on the basis that they relate to scripture in some way, albeit in their own distorted way. We have to underscore the accuracy of the Qur’anic wording: a *faction* (*ṭā’ifah*) of the Jews and Christians fit this bill. But it is an important and vocal faction, otherwise there would have been no need to mention it. This malevolent attitude has been at work ever since their first encounters with Muhammad (ﷺ). Jewish hostility to Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Islamic order in Madinah was later transformed into the ill-famed Crusades who descended upon the Islamic East from “Christian” Europe.

Since those times, Islamic interaction with half-hearted Torah-toters and Bible-bashers has become messier and messier because the Jews and Christians have broken away from all ethical standards of scripture that require mutual respect for others. They know very well that the Muslims have a reference point according to which all thoughts, ideas, and modes of behavior are rationalized and justified: the Qur’an and the example of the Prophet (ﷺ). In as much as the perfect Qur’an cannot be tampered with, they have

focused their energies on getting Muslims to lose confidence in their *dīn* by either doubting or contaminating its other foundational sources — to wit the generational condemnations of Muhammad (ﷺ), his life, and his pronouncements. Much of this havoc is attributable to the influence of Jewish history on Islamic subjects such as hadith, fiqh, and *tafsīr*. Instead of respecting the defining lines between Jews and Christians on one side and Muslims on the other, these troublemakers made themselves the spokesmen and authorities on Islam. Islam itself has been secularized by these intruders, with such success that most Muslims today think they can be secular and Muslim at the same time. So not only have European armies raided and colonized Muslim lands over the last two centuries, but European ideas have also colonized the Muslim mind, and remain entrenched in the attitudes and perceptions of secularized elites who carry both Muslim names and Judeo-Christian mind-sets at the same time.

Imperialism and Zionism have gone so unchallenged that their brainwashed proteges are the dominant ruling elites from the impoverished rural areas of Africa to the glittery urban centers of Arabia. In the past century, imperial “Christians” and Zionist “Jews” propped up intellectual and political elites whose preoccupation has been to belittle and dismiss Islam and the Qur’an as a *dīn*. This secular trend has suffered setbacks in the past two decades as committed Muslim intellectuals and activists have taken to the field and begun a rescue operation for the Muslim world. But now the imperialist Zionists and the Zionist imperialists are interfering even in this internal Islamic process, planning to support “moderate” Muslims against “extremist” and “radical” ones. Their political propagandists now demonize Muslims who demand self-determination as “terrorists,” “fanatics,” and “insurrectionists.” Some domesticated Muslims have come to accept this bipolar schism of the Muslims. And when these Muslims begin to succumb to the propaganda traps and mental ambushes that are laid out by the imperialists and the Zionists, Christian and Jewish hostility, instead of abating, only increases and also gets stronger.¹⁰⁴ Whenever Muslims do not have any backbone in interfaith meetings, the rhetoric turns against them.

All of the sweet talk about multiculturalism and pluralism begins to float away when Muslims show a determination to live by their own standards and to adhere closely to the real, true Book of Allah (ﷻ). Do any of the statements made by Christian ministers and their behind-the-scenes Jewish enablers seem surprising, given the malice that motivates an influential faction wearing a biblical costume? This unsubtle faction has been around for many, many centuries. Listen to Allah's (ﷻ) words,

A group of the followers of earlier revelation say [to one another], “Declare your belief in what has been revealed to the committed Muslims at the beginning of the day, and then declare your disbelief at the end [of the day]; but do not [really] believe anyone who does not follow your own faith” (3:72–73).

This has to be one of the most wicked and offensive ways of destabilizing the fabric of Muslim society and the fiber of Muslim unity. This changing of religions is a method they would use to shake the faith of susceptible Muslims or to sow doubts in the minds of unproven Muslims. During the 23-year period of anchoring in Arabian life an Islamic order, as the years went on, the hard-core commitment to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) grew steadily less than in the earlier formative years. This of course does not apply to the whole Islamic social order but rather to a number of individuals here and there. The climax of this less-than-tested adherence to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) came during the liberation of Makkah, when there was a mass influx into Islam of people who had held an adversarial position of war against Islam and the Prophet (ﷺ) for over two decades.

This *āyah* of course was revealed before the liberation of Makkah, but the human condition it talks about could have had an adverse effect on newcomers to Islam, who might have been taken in by people who accepted Islam and then renounced it. Add to all this the volatile Arabian mentality that was not steeped in scriptural knowledge, nor in the discipline that comes from scholarly pur-

suits and urban life. The unscriptured Arabians were under the impression that Jewish and Christian people of scripture had significantly more knowledge than they did about Allah (ﷻ), scriptures, the prophetic tradition, and so on. So if these unlettered Arabians were to see a group of former Christians or Jews reverting back to their previous religions, their own faith might have been shaken. Some would infer that these Christians and Jews, whom they regarded as knowledgeable on these matters, could have discovered some discrediting flaw or discrepancy in the message of Muhammad (ﷺ).

Muslims become vulnerable to this trick when they accept that Jews and Christians have scriptural knowledge. The fact is that they no longer possess scriptural knowledge, and have not for many centuries. It is this Qur’an that is knowledge and a source of knowledge, and anyone who chooses to adopt a self-surrendering posture to Allah (ﷻ) is privy to it. The Judeo-Christian agenda is to generate doubt in the minds and hearts of these self-yielding folk, that is, the Muslims. They do this by means of an army of intellectual and cultural agents, as well as the political puppets they have installed all over the Muslim world.

From time to time, depending on the political, military, economic or social climate, they raise a particular subject and provoke controversy and hysteria. Academic research, press articles, television documentaries, and investigative reporting all converge on such issues as the supposed inequalities of the genders in Islam, or that Islam encourages slavery, or that Islam is a capitalist religion, or that the legal punishments in Islam are brutal and inhuman, or that Islam is inherently violent.

Nowadays, the imperialist and Zionist factions of Christians and Jews are in a public frenzy about the intrinsic links between terrorism and Islam. The “war on terror” is in reality a war on the Islamic popular will to be free to yield to Allah (ﷻ) instead of to the “superpowers” and their client regimes. The Zionist-imperialist faction of the Western world has invaded and conquered Muslims territories because in those areas are the greatest signs of emerging Islamic self-determination. The people who are playing God within this faction are instructing their political proteges in

Arabia, Africa, and Asia to put an end to *madrasahs* and other Islamic institutions because they insist on operating outside the secular noose. This faction of capitalist “Christians” and imperialist Israelis have also pressured almost every country in the world to alter their banking procedures so that they can monitor the domestic movements of money and report “irregularities” to the Western financial gestapo.

Can there be a free Muslim mind and an independent Muslim voice within an ecumenical or interfaith meeting with Christians and Jews when they give their blessing to states and societies that have launched their military forces to hunt down Muslims of self-determination in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sudan, Georgia, Yemen, Somalia, and elsewhere? After more than half a century of Muslim resistance against Hindu aggression in Kashmir, the imperialist-Zionist cabal has forced Pakistan to change its political and military strategies toward India.

Corresponding to this imperialist-Zionist bloc within the traditional Jewish and Christian world are the rulers and officials in Muslim lands. Virtually all are part of this assault on today’s determined Muslims. George W. Bush, the American president from 2001–2008, King Mohammad of Morocco, Tony Blair, the British prime minister from 1997–2007, Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, King ‘Abdullah of Jordan, and King ‘Abdullah of Saudi Arabia are all cut from the same cloth. They should not be allowed to hide their real nature from the world by making appearances from time to time in synagogues, churches, and mosques. They carry their holy writ with them to their temples once a week — if that — but pursue entirely selfish, secular, and anti-Islamic policies in their public lives, not the least of which are their campaigns against sincere and independence-minded Muslims, wherever they may be found.

Muslims have to be fools to trust people who do not trust them. Islamic activists who should know better behave as though they have never read or understood the Qur’an. Zionists and imperialists will never trust Muslims; why, then, do so many Muslims trust them? And why do Muslims trust these types at a time when

they are killing Muslims all around the world? Or even listen to them or take any notice of them?

These words to any Muslim who is listening are timely; the imperial hordes centered around Zionist Israel say, “**but do not [really] believe anyone who does not follow your own dīn.**” Nowadays, “Islamic” lobbyists ignore these words and proceed to interact with politicians and officials from this category of people that the Qur’an is talking about, as if this warning from Allah (ﷻ) did not exist. Let us be candid; there are organizations and “Islamic” figureheads that have been helping to politicize Muslims in the West on secular terms. There are European and American Muslim councils, there are councils on European and American interfaith relations, and there are political action committees and their equivalents running around trying to curry favor with the very same politicians who have been cut down to size by these strong and direct words from Allah (ﷻ). But where are the Muslims who can relate these words to the current reality? The answer is that the current generation of Muslims does not feel comfortable with what Allah (ﷻ) has to say, but is quite comfortable courting the politicians and officials of the establishments that are sworn and militant enemies of independent Muslims and Islamic struggles.

Muslims must take notice. It is one thing for them to respect the freedom of those Jews and Christians whose personal choice is that “we do not want God in our public lives.” But it is another matter altogether to give them the freedom to go on the offensive and say “we cannot accept that Allah (ﷻ) play any part in the public lives of Muslims.” Their choice to dispense with Allah’s (ﷻ) guidance is theirs, but Allah (ﷻ) warns all devoted Muslims that when they disregard Him they become dangerous enemies of those that remain committed to Him. And Muslims cannot afford to pretend that this warning does not exist, and thus ignore or disregard it. Earlier in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, Jewish and Christian antipathy and aversion to Muslims was exposed by Allah (ﷻ),

Out of their selfish envy, many among the followers of earlier revelation would like to bring you back to deny-

ing the truth [of Allah's power presence] after you have committed [to Him] — [even] after the truth has become clear to them (2:109).

The warning in *āyah* 3:69, that “a faction of Biblical people would love to divert you [from Allah]” is said to have been revealed in circumstances involving Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, and Ḥudhayfaḥ ibn al-Yamān, when these companions of Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) were solicited by the Yahūd of Madinah.¹⁰⁵ On *āyāt* 3:70–72, Ibn Ishāq said, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, that, “‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ṣayf, ‘Uday ibn Zayd and al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Awf told each other, ‘Come, let us declare our faith in what was revealed to Muhammad and his company one time and then let us deny it at a later time. This way we will perplex them [the Muslims] about their *dīn*.’” Whether this was a contrivance or a conspiracy, it is obvious that whatever bad intention they had was exposed by these *āyāt*.¹⁰⁶

Muslims are ordered by Allah (ﷻ) to have the attitude described by the words,

...state [openly and publicly], “Look! All [true] guidance is Allah’s guidance, consisting in one’s being granted [revelation] such as you have been granted.” Or would they contend against you before your Sustainer? (3:73).

This is a direct response to the racist and selfish motivations behind their arguments. They contend they are the people of prophets, and that Prophets of God (ﷺ) have to come from them, but if any other person says he is a prophet, who is not endorsed by them, then he is an imposter! This line of thought comes from the racial arrogance of the Yahūd. And Allah (ﷻ) is telling them that all provision is in Allah’s (ﷻ) hands, including prophethood, which He grants to whomever He wants. It is not for them to decide who is a prophet and who is not a prophet.

It is out of this religious racism that they say, “but do not [in fact] believe anyone who does not follow your own faith.” Their

religious arrogance and racial narcissism does not permit them to accept the fact that Allah (ﷻ) may have selected another people to carry out His mission. They do not even want to acknowledge that Muhammad (ﷺ) has come with an authentic scripture; the excuse they plead may turn into an argument against them when they face their Lord on the Day of Judgment. Even though they themselves have forfeited covenant-bearing responsibilities and they know this by virtue of their societal left-turn away from God, these People of the Book are still bitter at seeing a simple people like the Arabs assume the responsibilities of the Covenant.

The words of Allah (ﷻ) bring them back to the truth immediately and forcefully,

Say, “Behold, all bounty and privilege is in the hand of Allah; He grants it to whom He wills, for Allah is Infinite, All-Knowing, singling out for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is limitless in His great plentifulness” (3:73–74).

God is not a racist. If He sees that a particular people are incapable of working His will He can assign it to another people. If the Israelis failed to fulfil their divine responsibilities, He is not going to put the universe on hold and wait for them to get their act together. He will, in His grace and amplitude, choose as an alternative people who will be tasked with doing His will on earth. And Allah (ﷻ) willed that His message and mission be relocated outside of the predominant race of earlier scriptures, whose failures and betrayals have been recorded by scriptural history. They could not honor their covenant. They disobeyed and humiliated Allah’s Prophets (ﷺ). They knew the truth and then ignored it. They simply abandoned the trust that Allah (ﷻ) had placed in them. When this balanced Qur’an came to them, they refused to acknowledge its source, Allah (ﷻ), and its communicator, Muhammad (ﷺ). It is because of this historical failure of the Israelis, and because of their immediate failure to accept Muhammad (ﷺ) and follow him, that Allah (ﷻ) passed the honor of the last Book and its associated

covenant, to another people, one defined not by any racial or genetic line, but only by their common humanity and faith in Him.

Allah (ﷻ) has placed Muslims in this honored position; but there are a good number of Muslims who have become used to being at the end of the line. If they cannot snap out of their indifference and apathy, some at least are liable to emulate the false example of Banū Isrā'īl: arrogance, complacency, and rebelliousness against God and His Prophet (ﷺ).

The Qur'an's words penetrate deep into the psychology of the malevolent minority among those who call themselves Jews and Christians. These descriptions deliver an accurate image of those who cling to scripture in their own ways,

And among the followers of past scripture there is many a one who, if you entrust him with a treasure, will [faithfully] restore it to you; and there is among them many a one who, if you entrust him with a tiny gold coin, will not restore it to you unless you keep standing over him — which is an outcome of their assertion, “No blame can attach to us [for anything we may do] with regard to these scripture-less folk;” and [so] they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware [that it is a lie]. Lo, but [Allah is aware of] those who keep their bond with Him, and are conscious of Him; and, verily, Allah loves those who are aware [of His power presence].

Behold, as for those who trade away their bond with Allah and their own pledges for a trifling gain, they shall not share in the blessings of the life to come; and Allah will neither speak to them nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them of their sins; and afflictive torment awaits them (3:75–77).

Readers of these *āyāt* must realize that the words here are not those of a human being. They express the realistic truth, beyond regard to the human perception or consideration of things. Not all people of previous scripture are condemned on the basis of a broad

generalization that they harbor ill feelings toward the followers of this last Scripture. Instead, it is acknowledged that many of them are honest and trustworthy, but *some* are not. Let us remember that the Jews and the Christians were alive and thriving when the Qur’an was gradually being introduced into the history and experience of the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula. The interaction between the Muslims of that time and their co-scripturalists, the Jews and the Christians, can serve as a defining example for all Muslim dealings with Christians and Jews. The *āyāt* of this eternal Book warn that there is a malevolent faction of scripturalists who harbor out-and-out animosity against the bearers of this final covenant. They spare no effort in their campaign against Islam and its committed adherents. In this context, the words of the Qur’an are balanced and reasonable in its consideration of followers of these earlier scriptures. They are granted their due, even though they may be in a state of social incompatibility with the Islamic order. If these were the words of the Prophet (ﷺ), or some worldly sage or philosopher, they would clearly have been influenced by the social circumstances in which they were written, or the human nature of their author. But no; these words were meant to express the truth and to have humans respect and abide by these facts.

But on the other hand there are some people who come from a scriptural background, yet are not reliable and trustworthy. They are marked by greed, selfishness, and disrespect for the “other.” If Muslims were to trust them with a copper coin, they would not return it to them of their own free will. Muslims would have to make an issue of it, put pressure on them, and maybe take them to court to regain their financial due. These types of people defend their behavior, and in many cases they do so by arguing that they owe no justice to those who do not share their faith, **“No incrimination can attach to us [for anything that we may do] with regard to these gentiles.”** This is a trait particularly found among the Yahūd, and in fact justified in Yahūdī theology, although it appears to have rubbed off on Christians too.

The attitude of the Yahūd toward gentiles is legendary in its racist applications. According to Yahūdī law, anyone whose moth-

er is not a Jew is considered a non-Jew, regardless of whether the father is a Jew. The seven Noachian laws¹⁰⁷ — laws of Noah (ﷺ) — *but not the commandments of the Torah*, are binding on a gentile. A non-Jew who converts to Judaism is not regarded to be a Jew by many Yahūd. The Yahūdī law does not recognize as binding any marriage between a Jew and a gentile, all marital relationships between them being prohibited. A gentile could offer sacrifices to God and such sacrifices were offered at the Temple. The non-Jew, however, was prohibited from eating the paschal lamb — a lamb slaughtered on the eve of the festival of Passover and eaten on the first night — as well as certain other offerings. A gentile might not be appointed king over Israel or to any other governing position over Jews. A Jew was — and still is — forbidden from selling land in Palestine to a gentile. Toward the end of the Second Temple Period,¹⁰⁸ during the time of tension between the Jews and Rome, the rabbis enacted several decrees to diminish contact between Jew and gentile. The Yahūd and Yahūdī authorities have always displayed a strong streak of contempt toward the gentiles, and especially toward the Arabs. It was held, therefore, that a Jew would incur no guilt for “cheating” an Arab or a gentile. These Yahūd could deceive a gentile and have no qualms about it; the dispossession of the Palestinians can be seen as a reflection of this attitude on a grand scale.

What is more, they justify their behavior toward non-Jews by “religious” arguments. The strength of the human conscience should be enough to override these religious presumptions. They should know there is no godly sanction for perfidy, deceit, and injustice, whatever the circumstances. Allah (ﷻ) has provided everyone with individual consciences that should be strong enough for them to know when they are doing wrong to others. Allah (ﷻ) does not allow humans to be unjust to other humans, let alone demand it. There is no scriptural legitimacy for confiscating or seizing the wealth of other peoples. Allah (ﷻ) has never given any race on earth the authority to rob others just because those others are of a different race or religion. But Yahūd are Yahūd. Their irreconcilability with other people, as well as their cynicism toward these gentile

others, has become their religion, “And [so] they falsify things about Allah, being well aware [of their falsifications].”

Behold, as for those who trade away their bond with Allah and their own pledges for a trifling price, they shall not partake in the blessings of the life to come; and Allah will neither speak to them nor look upon them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them of their sins; and agonizing suffering awaits them (3:77).

According to accounts in the two Ṣaḥīḥs, this *āyah* was revealed in response to financial irregularities and a betrayal of trust between a Muslim, al-Ash‘ath, and a Yahūdī. Al-Ash‘ath came to Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) and complained to him that the Yahūdī would not honor his possession of a piece of land. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked al-Ash‘ath for evidence, but he replied that he had no evidence. Then the Prophet (ﷺ) turned to the Yahūdī and asked him for a verbal affirmation, invoking the name of Allah (ﷻ), that would deny al-Ash‘ath his land. Then al-Ash‘ath protested by saying that mere words spoken by this type of character should not be the basis for him losing the right to his own land. It was in the situation of this judicial deadlock that Allah (ﷻ) revealed these *āyāt*.¹⁰⁹ It is also reported that the above *āyah* was revealed to expose Ḥuyayy ibn al-Akḥṭab and Ka‘b ibn al-Ashraf, two chieftains of Yahūd in Madinah, and other Yahūd who were involved in a cover-up of some words of their own Torah and the distortion of some of its meanings. Then they turned to people in Madinah, saying, “But all this is from God!”¹¹⁰ And to add insult to injury, the words of the Qur’an caused them to pay for their scriptural shenanigans.

The same sources point out the Yahūd in Arabia at that time regarded the Arabians as gentiles, and therefore that divine laws did not apply to them, leaving their wealth open to exploitation. But then Islam came to the Arabians and they became people of scripture, yet the Yahūd could never admit this and continued to treat the Arabs as “gentiles.” This racist interpretation of scripture pollutes souls and weakens consciences. And for this reason Allah’s

(ﷻ) standard, which is central to His scriptures, should be stated for all people of sound mind, **“No, but [Allah is aware of] those who keep their bond with Him, and are conscious of Him; and, verily, Allah loves those who are alert to His power presence.”**

Sometimes people are tempted to ignore their principles and ethical standards in order to gain more power and to accumulate wealth. This is a temptation that comes to all people, regardless of their scripture or faith. But Allah (ﷻ) makes His position clear: people who are bonded to Him do not give up their moral character or step down from their principled grounds to generate profits or to make fortunes. There can be no validation of this attitude that trades Allah’s (ﷻ) values and ethics for some financial gains or some lucrative business. In particular, there is no excuse for doing such a thing on the spurious grounds that someone is a Jew and someone else is a gentile. This argument amounts to a lame excuse for racism.

Human relations and the trust that binds one individual with another are a function of a sense of Allah’s (ﷻ) presence and Allah’s (ﷻ) power — that is, *taqwá*. Human merchants, individual salesmen, corporate businessmen, and financial officers, as well as all other members of society, are required to realize that their one-on-one transactions with the “other” are a part of a lifelong transaction with Allah (ﷻ). When a person exchanges his life for what Allah (ﷻ) has offered, this person will not be so greedy as to justify taking someone else’s wealth by using a racist “us-against-them” logic. The basis for mutual human trust is this *taqwá*, this shielding one’s self from the adverse effects of rejecting Allah (ﷻ). Human trust cannot be based on a religious argument for a chosen race, nor on a racial monopoly of divine scripture. There has to be a human common denominator that is available to everyone, and that can only be *taqwá*.

Allah (ﷻ) is differentiating between scriptural people who can be trusted and scriptural folks who cannot. He does not mean this understanding to be restricted to individual monetary transactions. This truth also includes those scriptural people who are in positions of power or control financial empires. The code of ethics

of the Qur’an is meant to be understood and applied to all situations, on every scale. For instance, today, the Saudi government and some of its citizens have deposited something on the order of \$800 billion in American banks and financial institutes, and other Muslims who do not understand the meanings of this Book have deposited hundreds of billions of dollars in financial institutions and banks run by non-Muslims. This is at a time when hungry and poor peoples all around the world, including many Muslims, are in need of a lifeline to sustain their lives. This is also at a time when most Muslim *khatibs* climb the pulpit every Jumu’ah only to deliver *khutbahs* that are either prepared for them by their ministries of *awqāf*, or are conveniently self-censored to ignore these issues of trust and finances mentioned in this and several other *sūrahs* of this oft-recited Qur’an. When governments get to do what they want by placing the resources and finances of the Ummah in the hands of *kāfirs* who are the enemies of the Ummah, and when sheikhs deviate from the Qur’an and the concerns of the Ummah, we get the situation we have today.¹¹¹

In the absence of *taqwá*, this is the sort of thing that can happen. The Saudi-sponsored *masjids* around the world do not want the Muslim public to develop the thinking and intellectual capability to understand the vital words of the Qur’an, so that we, the Muslims, can avoid falling into error. Take the mind away from the Qur’an and anything can happen.

Naturally, racism and the national interest will react in due course, and the Saudi equivalents of the Israelis, who broke their covenant with Allah (ﷻ), are demonstrating how they too are able to break their covenant with Allah (ﷻ). Those who violate their trust with other peoples using a “chosen race” attitude or a “national interest” mentality have in the process distanced themselves from Allah (ﷻ). They prove by their behavior and policies that they have no *taqwá*; to them Allah (ﷻ) is not a power presence in this world, so their attitude amounts to saying “why should we care about Allah (ﷻ) or what He says in His Book?”

Taqwá can be a profound socio-psychological force and equilibrater. When all people, or most people, in a particular society are

collectively aware of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence, they behave accordingly. This *taqwá* defines how and why we can trust each other as members of one society, even if our religious persuasions are different. In this preponderance of *taqwá* — the palpable feeling that Allah (ﷻ) is powerfully present — people can trust in Allah (ﷻ) and trust in each other. Then it becomes an infraction of this collective spirit of *taqwá* to lie, deceive, or renege on agreements or trusts. It is the absence of this collective spirit of *taqwá* that makes it possible for the ruling elites in Muslim lands to deposit astronomical amounts of Muslim wealth in foreign countries while most Muslim peoples struggle to survive, and to intentionally hide from view and debate the crucial meanings of the Qur'an.

They Present Their Own Words as Allah's (ﷻ) Words

And, behold, there are certainly some among them who distort the Bible with their tongues, so as to make you think that [what they say] is from the Bible, the while it is not from the Bible; and who say, "This is from Allah," the while it is not from Allah. And thus do they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware [that it is a lie] (3:78).

Here the words of the Qur'an remove the covering from yet another type of people who call themselves Jews or Christians. They try to mislead Muslims; and they do so by using the Bible for their own purposes. They falsify the Bible by their style of translation; they skew definitions to fit into their worldly interests and to serve their personal preferences. As usual they do all this to gain power or profits because they are no longer grounded in scripture; they have given themselves to materialism and a craving for wealth and worldly possessions, and have little interest in ethical or spiritual matters. One of the major issues to which they apply their linguistic manipulation concerns the Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ). The convergence of the religious class and

the ruling class in Christian history is responsible for all the misinformation that comes out of their ecclesiastical, academic, and policy institutions.

“And, in truth, there are some of them who warp the Bible with their tongues, so as to make you think that [what they say] is from the Bible, the while it is not from the Bible...” Ibn ‘Abbās reports that this refers to the Yahūd. These Yahūd approached Ka‘b ibn al-Ashraf — a Yahūdī known for his virulent animosity toward Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) — with an altered Torah. In it they had rewritten the prophecy pertaining to Muhammad (ﷺ). The Banū Qurayzah faction of the Yahūd in Madinah adopted this biblical forgery and absorbed it into their copies of scripture.¹¹²

There have also been such influential Yahūdī figures as Ḥuyayy ibn al-Akhṭab, Mālīk ibn al-Sayf, and Ka‘b ibn al-Ashraf, who distorted and misinterpreted the Bible to avoid having to acknowledge the authenticity and the legitimacy of Muhammad (ﷺ). They added words, deleted words, or changed the meanings of words, to suit their own short-term clan interests. They did all this knowing exactly what they were doing, lying about God and His scripture and representing their own words as God’s. The Qur’an is unambiguous about them: they are intentional and premeditated liars. This well-established trait was demonstrated in their daily greetings to the Prophet (ﷺ) during a portion of his mission in Madinah; instead of expressing *al-salāmu ‘alaykum* — meaning *peace be unto you* — they would alter it slightly so that it would sound like *al-sāmu ‘alaykum* — meaning *poison or death upon you*.¹¹³ The Qur’an also refers to these same types in the following *āyah*,

Among those of the Jewish faith there are some who distort the meaning of the [revealed] words, taking them out of their context and saying, [as it were], “We have heard, but we disobey,” and, “Hear without hearkening,” and, “Hearken unto us, [O Muhammad],” thus making a play with their tongues, and implying that the [true] faith is false. And had they but said, “We have heard, and we pay heed,” and “Hear [us],

and have patience with us,” it would indeed have been for their own good, and more upright... (4:46).

In numerous other *āyāt* too, the Qur’an highlights the fact that people of earlier scriptures altered and interpolated the original texts of their scriptures, the Torah and the Gospel. Excluding the above *āyāt* in *Sūrah*s *Āl ‘Imrān* and *al-Nisā’*, there are others such as,

...seeing that a good many of them were wont to listen to the word of Allah and then, after understanding it, to pervert it knowingly (2:75).

Then, for breaking their solemn pledge, We rejected them and caused their hearts to harden — [so that now] they distort the meaning of the [revealed] words, taking them out of their context... (5:13).

O followers of the Bible! Now there has come to you Our Apostle, to make clear to you much of what you have been concealing [from yourselves] of the Bible... (5:15).

Say, “Who has bestowed from on high the divine Writ that Mūsá brought to men as a light and a guidance, [and] that you treat as [mere] leaves of paper, making a show of them the while you conceal [so] much... (6:91).

When the inner thoughts of discerning Jews and Christians are brought to light, one undeniable fact bubbles to the surface: their own intellectuals have not been totally reconciled with portions of the Bible. The critical study of the Hebrew Bible falls into two main categories — Literary or Higher Criticism and Textual or Lower Criticism. The former deals with questions of the authorship, date of composition, style, and specific interests of the various literary elements that constitute the Bible. The latter is confined to problems of a purely textual nature and attempts to establish, where difficulties are encountered, the true wording of texts. The Dutch philosopher

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) is generally regarded as the founder of Higher Criticism in the West, for he challenged the rabbinical assertion that most of the Pentateuch — Greek (and Christian) name for the first five books of the Bible, ascribed to Moses (ﷺ), and called the *Torah* by Jews — was written by Moses (ﷺ). He suggested that Ezra,¹¹⁴ a Hebrew scribe named in the Old Testament, was the compiler of the Pentateuch and the historical books.¹¹⁵

It should also be noted that there are works mentioned in the Bible which have not survived. The oldest was the *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, apparently a collection of epic poems and panegyrics (praises) relating to the wars of the Israelis under Moses (ﷺ). Another is the *Book of Jashar*. The *Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* and the *Chronicles of the Kings of Judah* described the monarchic period and were the chief sources for the biblical Book of Kings. Other works from that time include the *Book of the Words of Solomon*, the *Words of Iddo and Seer*, and a *midrash* on the Book of Kings.¹¹⁶ The Books of Judges and Samuel are also based on earlier sources.

Today's Bible is now said within Christian circles to be based on the revealed knowledge of man, which had been written by people who had derived their knowledge from a second-hand source. For instance the New Testament, from which all the present translations of the Bible are derived, was written after the Council of Nicaea in 325CE, a church council called by the Roman emperor Constantine.¹¹⁷ The Council established the Trinitarian creed as the official version of Christianity and condemned all other understandings, particularly unitarian (monotheistic) ones as heretical. The Codex Sinaiticus and the Codex Vaticanus (the word *codex* refers to books written by hand before the invention of printing) are dated from the late fourth century, and the Codex Alexandrius from the fifth century. All such manuscripts of the New Testament were written after the Council of Nicaea and differ from the manuscripts that existed before the Council. The unreliability of these newer manuscripts is admitted by the Churches themselves. Even the metaphysics of Christianity today is no longer based upon these gospels.

Furthermore, the history of the Bible shows that the first Roman Catholic Bible was the translation of Jeromes (382CE), a

secretary to Pope Damasus, and that the Latin Bible, published in 1582, was again published in Dunaway in 1609.¹¹⁸ Today the Bible is presented via the English Version with references to the Roman Catholic version. The Bible, as it appears today in English, has been repeatedly reexamined, revised, and edited since 1600. Several sections of the original parts of the Bible, known as the Apocrypha (parts supposedly incorrect), have been excluded from the current Bible, such as the Books of Judith, Tobit, Baruch, Esther, and others. At the conclusion of such revisions, the current Bible was finally published with the title of *The Authorized Version*. But many scholars agreed that this new version was plagued by numerous serious errors, so the old Bible was reintroduced as the essential truth. The *King James Version* of the Bible, published in 1611, was eventually “corrected” again in 1952 and a new Bible, the *Revised Standard Version (RSV)*, was prepared. Still, after all the “corrections” made up to 1952, this version of the Bible was not altogether accepted. A short time later, in 1971, an even newer, double-corrected Bible was introduced.

Lacking immunity from such recurrent textual contamination, the Catholic Bible, too, has undergone numerous changes. The Bible that was translated into Greek from the Hebrew and from the Hebrew to Latin had undergone several rearrangements by various assemblies: in 320CE by the great Constantine Assembly; in 364CE by the Assembly of Ludicia; and by the special Synod Assembly in 397CE. Furthermore, upon each change or rearrangement, some of the books which were in the Old Testament were removed, only to be reinstated in different form upon the initiation of Protestantism.

During this time, many Christian theologians voiced their opposition to the various translations and rearrangements made to the Bible, and insisted that some parts that had been added to it were inconsistent with the essence of biblical revelation. The undependable and at times capricious fluctuation of the text of the Gospel helps explain the inconsistencies and contradictions of Christian dogma, as well as the many schisms in the history of the Church. Today, many Christians recognize the tendency of priests and evangelists to concentrate upon certain parts of the Bible while

neglecting others. The predominant reason for such a method is to avoid the sections of the gospel that may deem whatever is being preached contradictory. Should the reader embark on a close study of the Bible, such contradictions would become obvious.

The pestilence that has infected many theologians and “divines” is that when they are wrong, they refuse to admit the possibility, and they insist on their own understandings, thus distorting reality and fact in the name of religion. This trait is not reserved for Jews and Christians; it had also affected others. Time and again, throughout history, there have been men of religion who are not much concerned with the truth in scripture. They are more concerned with how to bend and twist the words of scripture to serve their own purposes and interests, and those of the worldly powers of the time, even if these fly in the face of well-established scriptural principles. These “men of religion” always exploit average peoples’ inability and reluctance to take mutilated scripture to their hearts and minds so that the same “holy men” can get away with subordinating God to their egos and material wealth.

There are also Muslim “men of the cloth” who are more than ready to imitate their Jewish and Christian counterparts in this way. They, too, deform the *āyāt* of the Qur’an to suit those who pay them. Governments and regimes scattered all over the Muslim world tell their sheikhs what to say in their *khutbahs* and fatwas, and what to teach in their *madrāsahs*. This has been a regular feature of modern Muslim history. In the 1960s, when the Egyptian government wanted to launch a war against the people of Yemen, it relied on its professional ‘alims to whip up a nationalist and socialist hysteria so that it could justify its war plans. The same government, when it decided to make peace with the Zionist occupiers of the Holy Land, turned to its faithful employees, the graduates of al-Azhar and other officially sanctioned ‘alims, and ordered them to produce fatwas in favor of an Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement.

Precisely the same conduct is seen from the Saudi rulers in Jeddah and Riyadh. In the early 1990s they summoned their obedient scholars to sanction a “peace process” between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and the Saudi ‘alims wasted no time in approving

this so-called peace initiative. They threw citations from the Qur'an and Sunnah, most of them plucked out of context, at a largely ignorant Muslim public, and said in effect that it was permissible for Muslims and Israelis to reach a peaceful accommodation. They neglected to cite any prophetic precedents (*sunan*) or any scriptural bases for their fatwas, except for the oft-repeated Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah connection, which does not apply to the Islamic-Israeli conflict. Thus have Islam and the Qur'an become so cheap in the eyes of some mercenary scholars that they are willing to spin Allah's (ﷻ) words to suit the desires of their superiors in the ruling palace and the military barracks.

Meanwhile, the Christian clergy are busy trying to find and use anything in the Bible that can be used to confirm that Jesus and Mary (ﷺ) are gods, partial gods, or God Himself (*nastaghfir-allāh*). Whatever they say and whatever they do runs up against logic and common sense,

It is not conceivable that a human being to whom Allah had granted revelation, and sound judgment, and prophethood, should thenceforth have said to people, "Conform to me beside Allah;" but rather [he did exhort them saying], "Become men of Allah by spreading the knowledge of the divine Writ, and by your own deep study [thereof]." And neither did he bid you to take the angels and the prophets for your lords; [for] would he bid you to deny the truth after you have yielded yourselves to Allah? (3:79–80).

Ibn Ishāq and al-Bayhaqī state, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, that Abū Rāfi' al-Quraḍī said,

When the sages of Judaism and the Christian clergy who had come from Najrān met with Rasul-Allah he counseled them about Islam. They replied, "Muhammad! Do you want us to worship you like the Christians worship Jesus?" He replied, "Of course not, God forbid."¹¹⁹

Allah’s Prophets and Messengers (ﷺ) were the first to recognize and accept they were human and mortal, and that Allah (ﷻ) is divine and eternal. Not one of Allah’s commissioned Prophets (ﷺ) could ever confuse this issue, much less tell people to worship his person along with Allah (ﷻ). They did, however, exhort people to be men of Allah (ﷻ), doing His will on earth with the knowledge they received from Him and with the confidence they have in Him. Allah’s (ﷻ) words and His works on earth motivate them to do their share. Although they refuse to admit it, both the Jews and Christians are in violation of this unity of Allah (ﷻ), **“And the Jews said, ‘Ezra is God’s son,’ while the Christians said, ‘The Christ is God’s son,’ Such are their statements...” (9:30).**

The very basic and well-established fact of scriptural communication to humanity throughout history is that man should yield to Allah (ﷻ), **“Say, ‘Allah alone do I conform to, sincere in my *dīn* to Him’” (39:14).** There has been no scripture and no prophet who instructed people to deify angels or prophets. It is impossible; it never happened. Those who claim God has a son or a chosen race do so without any basis whatsoever in revelation.

Likewise, in the world today there are “official Muslims” who violate Allah’s (ﷻ) authority by considering certain presidents and kings to be “authorities in their own right.” They have almost managed to purge the Qur’an of its ideological and political content; but were it not for the Islamic movement and the blood of the *mujāhids*, from their obscure conditions in China to their vilification in the Western media, they would have succeeded completely. These mercenary ‘alims should wake up to the clarion-calls in the *āyāt* of the Qur’an,

And indeed, within every society have We raised up an apostle [entrusted with this message]: conform to Allah, and shun the powers of evil! (16:36).

Before your time We never sent any apostle without revealing to him that there is no deity save Me, [and that], therefore, you shall conform to Me [alone]! (21:25).

And if any of them [the angels] were to say, “Behold, I am a deity beside Him,” that one We should requite with Hell: thus do We requite all [such] evil-doers (21:29).

Yet [above all else], ask any of Our Apostles, whom We sent forth before your time, whether We have ever allowed deities other than the Most Gracious to be complied with [by human beings]! (43:45).

They Promised to Follow the Last Prophet (ﷺ)

And lo, Allah accepted, through the prophets, this solemn pledge [from the followers of earlier scriptures], “If, after all the revelation and the wisdom which I have vouchsafed to you, there comes to you an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must believe in him and support him. Do you,” said He, “acknowledge and accept My bond on this condition?” They answered, “We do acknowledge it.”

Said He, “Then bear witness [thereto], and I shall be your witness. And, hereafter, all who turn away [from this pledge], it is they, they who are truly iniquitous. Do they seek, perchance, a *dīn*, other than Allah’s, although it is unto Him that whatever is in the heavens and on earth surrenders itself, willingly or unwillingly — since to Him all must return? (3:81–83).

All of the *āyāt* in the first part of this *sūrah* highlight the treachery of some of those who try to monopolize scripture for their own selves and interests. They even go so far as to omit references to Muhammad (ﷺ) from their previous scriptures. Such people should find solace in these *āyāt*, as the truth surfaces: all the prophets (ﷺ) constitute a sequence of reinforcing human efforts rather than working at cross-purposes with each other. No prophets (ﷺ) had any personal agendas and thus there is no favoritism to be assigned

by any of their followers. The prophets’ (ﷺ) aggregate pledge was to consolidate their historical gains against those who were at odds with Allah (ﷻ). All prophets (ﷺ) shared the same mission. It is because of this that the followers of all preceding scriptures are invited to yield to Allah (ﷻ) and finish the task for which all the prophets (ﷺ) were sent: to conform to and obey Allah (ﷻ), and to reject the impositions of imposters.

If all the preceding prophets (ﷺ) pledged to support a prophet confirming the truth already in their possession, then why do those who purport to follow those prophets (ﷺ) not do the same? When Muhammad (ﷺ) came with validation of all prior scriptures, confirming the missions of all his prophetic forerunners, and introduced this concluding Scripture to mankind, why would anyone balk at accepting this responsibility?

Allah (ﷻ) in effect asks all His Prophets (ﷺ), “If I were to send this Prophet, would you support him?” And they affirmed they would. But this fact, due to the preponderance of lies and distortions, does not settle in the public mind. This *āyah* claims that all previous prophets (ﷺ) had information pertaining to the final Prophet (ﷺ). But the followers of these prophets (ﷺ), for reasons of arrogance and self-aggrandizement, chose to suppress this information and hide it from their people.

Today humanity is suffering partly because it has chosen to break ranks with this succession of prophets (ﷺ). It writes its own history and is still confused. It subverts scripture and is paying the price. It wants to feed its body while starving its soul. It chooses not to be inspired and uplifted by the presence of Allah (ﷻ); it prefers to be excited by drugs and narcotics. It fills senses with risky ventures and action, but has emptied its heart and soul of spiritual fulfilment and enlightenment. There is no longer any real happiness or joy. And the reason is that people want to satisfy the beast in themselves and not the best in themselves.

Mankind has picked a *dīn* — a path — that is not endorsed by Allah (ﷻ). It all began when man racialized God, then monopolized Him, and then abandoned Him. **“Do they seek, perchance, a *dīn* other than Allah’s, although it is to Him that whatever is in**

the heavens and on earth surrenders itself, willingly or unwillingly, since to Him all must revert?" Mankind must understand that it is in pain and distress because the people on the bottom of the social order have permitted the people on the top of the social order, the interlocking religious and political elites, to impose on them a man-made *dīn*, with all its materialistic trappings.

The human component of existence is becoming the discordant constituent of the world. When man abandons the spirit and system of Allah (ﷻ) he lives in a perilous world. The dangers besetting him take many forms, some induced by him, including many "natural" catastrophes, and some triggered by him, such as social upheavals. They range from the periodic to the persistent, from the microscopic to the cosmic. At one end of the scale is the tiny microorganism *Pasteurella Pestis*, the plague bacillus that killed an estimated 43 million people in Europe and Asia between 1345 and 1350CE, in the pandemic known as the Black Death.

At the other end of the scale is the Sun, from which the ceaseless stream of radiation promotes life on this planet. In the form of heat and visible light, this radiation is now the basic fuel of all life forms. But the radiation that living organisms utilize occupies only a narrow band in the spectrum. Beyond the ultraviolet rays lie wide bands of X-rays and gamma-rays that can destroy the bonds holding organic molecules together. If these lethal rays were not largely absorbed by the ozone layer in the Earth's stratosphere, all but the most primitive forms of life would be killed.¹²⁰ Yet with man's large-scale technical activities he is damaging the very ozone layer upon which his continuing survival depends.

In some ways man has made his environment much more hospitable over the last few centuries, yet with all the new vistas of modern science at his command he is still in danger from the same age-old enemies that have pursued him through the ages: earthquakes, fires, floods, volcanic eruptions, plague and pestilence, wars of great attrition, and assassinations and crimes against humanity. Modern medicine has been able to control deadly outbreaks of such diseases as plague, cholera, and yellow fever. But these same controls can sometimes cause bacteria to develop new and more resist-

ant strains. Similarly, modern science now possesses the means to punch holes in the ozone layer, man's outer and most essential defense against radiation death.

Many of the achievements of science and technology that are beneficial to man were obtained while this same man was distancing himself from God. Man in this frame of mind regarded his scientific emancipation as an opportunity to bring "nature" under control. Dikes have been built to keep out the sea, embankments raised to limit the course of a river, and marshes drained to make good farmland. But "nature" may be biding its time. Sooner or later, it would seem, the waters will sweep away the work of centuries like so many flimsy barriers, and wreak their own retribution on those who put their trust in the work of their egos.

In today's God-forsaking world, Earth's population is the largest in man's history, forcing some people to use potentially dangerous places such as fertile mountain slopes and low-lying land around rivers and sea coasts as habitations. There is a desperate need to feed the many hungry mouths around the world. The new genetically engineered strains of hybrid food grain have been found to draw more nutrients from the soil than before, exposing the land to erosion and thereby making it useless. The consequent replenishment of the soil with artificial fertilizer then alters the character of the soil. Medicine, antiseptic hygiene, industrialization, city life are all departures from "nature." Little does modern and scientific man think that the erosion of his protective ozone layer around his planet is a progressive result of his industrialization, which in turn is the degenerative result of his greed for profit and comfort rather than his ambition for human dignity.

As man continues to expand his materialistic *dīn*, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis will just be local events compared to the wholesale horrors of war and epidemics, phenomena that frequently go hand in hand. Plague, typhus, syphilis, and dysentery raged through Medieval and Renaissance Europe as state warred against state and armies marched and countermarched to feed the exuberance and greed of kings and princes. In the summer of 1528, during the long struggle for supremacy

between the French and the Holy Roman Empire, a French army was close to defeating Emperor Charles V's Spanish troops near Naples when typhus struck. Within a month only 4,000 of the 25,000 French soldiers remained alive. This remnant was cut to pieces, allowing the Hapsburgs and Spain to dominate Europe for another century. When the fate of nations could be decided by the bite of a louse it is no wonder that man's attitude to the world about him was one of nervous uncertainty and fear.

The campaign that ended in disaster outside Naples was just one in the world's seemingly endless succession of wars. Whatever the reasons for the many wars of history — territorial expansion, trade rivalry, the imposition of a religion, or self-aggrandizement — their aims have never been achieved without suffering, atrocity, and death. But over and above the senseless violence of war there is the cruelty that man inflicts on man, sometimes so monstrous that it leaves the mind numb with horror. Nor is man's inhumanity something that came to an end with the grisly persecution of the Muslims in Palestine by the Crusaders, or with the sacking of Baghdad by the Tatars. Our own time has provided fresh evidence of man's capacity for appalling cruelty to his fellow men: the systematic slaughter of Muslims in the Balkans, of Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq, and of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, for instance. The Muslims of the world have become the unspoken undesirables against whom war is almost always "the right thing to do." In the post-bipolar world the long catalog continues, most horribly in areas once belonging to a vibrant *ummaḥ*, and it is a list that grows longer each decade.

In this world without Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn* there are those who seek to achieve their political aims or ambitions by murdering their opponents. Indeed, assassination of one's opponent has long been an accepted weapon of political warfare. From the stabbing death of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to the cold-blooded murder of Ḥasan al-Bannā, the hanging of Sayyid Quṭb, the gunning down of Ayatullah Muṭahharī, and the point-blank assassination of Malcolm X, the murder of one man has often seemed, but rarely been, the simple answer to a complex

political problem. In any event, most such assassinations have provoked the very crises they were intended to prevent. Not just a few have proved turning points in the course of human history.

Until man has conquered this self-centeredness there seems little he can do to prevent the systematic cruelty of states and individuals. Man has to learn that his social and natural worlds are intertwined; either one can impact the course of the other. The artificial *dīn* of *kufr* can wreck man’s existence on earth. If only people could read Allah’s (ﷻ) words with these facts in their minds. He says,

And to Allah prostrate themselves, willingly or unwillingly, all [things and beings] that are in the heavens and on earth, as do their shadows in the mornings and the evenings (13:15).

Have, then, they [who deny the truth] never considered any of the things that Allah has created — [how] their shadows turn right and left, prostrating themselves before Allah and utterly submissive [to His will]? For, before Allah, prostrates itself all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth — every beast that moves, and the angels: [even] these do not bear themselves with false pride. They fear their Sustainer high above them, and do whatever they are bidden to do (16:48–50).

It is only this ideological Muslim Ummah that is able to relate social upheavals to natural disasters, as a function of human history and destiny. Only the committed Muslims have the potential to reintegrate the prophetic historical consolidation of the common mission outlined to all prophets (ﷺ) in scripture. In this capacity Muhammad (ﷺ) and his followers are advised to declare their commitment and faith in all scriptures and prophets (ﷺ). And that means there is only one acceptable *dīn*,

Say, “We are committed to Allah, and to that which has been bestowed from on high upon us, and that

which has been bestowed upon Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and their descendants, and that which has been vouchsafed by their Sustainer to Moses and Jesus and all the [other] prophets: we do not discriminate among them. And to Him do we surrender ourselves.” For if one goes in search of a *dīn* other than self-surrender to Allah, it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the losers (3:84–85).

Al-Mujāhid and al-Suddī indicate that these last two *āyāt* were revealed to address a particular event. Hārith ibn Suwayd, the brother of al-Ḥullās ibn Suwayd, who was one of the Anṣār, renounced Islam along with twelve others. They also left Madinah and joined the *kāfirs* in Makkah. Later al-Ḥullās pleaded with his brother to repent and ask for forgiveness. Ibn ‘Abbās states that Hārith atoned for his misdeed after the revelation of these *āyāt*.¹²¹

After the prophets (ﷺ) and their followers affirmed they would follow a final prophet who would come and confirm their own scriptures, as related in *āyah* 3:81, this *āyah* goes on to tell Muhammad (ﷺ) and his followers to acknowledge and affirm the commitment of previous prophets (ﷺ) and their peoples to Allah (ﷻ). This means that Islam is also the *dīn* of all the previous prophets (ﷺ). Thus Islam is inclusive of all prophetic missions pre-dating its Muhammadi finality. It certifies the validity of all the prophets (ﷺ) in human history. Islam also conjoins the theoretical and practical aspects of *dīn*. It underscores the fact that all these historical episodes have now reached fruition in this Arab human experience.

This discourse follows *āyāt* in which Allah (ﷻ) declares it is unto Him that **“whatever is in the heavens and on earth surrenders itself, willingly or unwillingly...”** This underlines the fact that there is a natural surrender to Allah (ﷻ) and there is a social surrender to Him; the affairs of this world are at their optimum when both natural and social surrender are harmonized. The fact of a consolidated historical march of prophets and apostles (ﷺ) on a singular directional course is evident in this discourse. It announces

that the essence of scripture runs through the divine missions of all these “biblical” prophets (ﷺ). Or, as expressed in another *āyah*, **“Behold, We have inspired you [O Muhammad] just as We inspired Noah and all the prophets after him...” (4:163).**

Two particular prophets (ﷺ) are pointed out in *āyah* 3:84 as there were in the time of Muhammad (ﷺ), as there are now, large numbers of people claiming to follow them. These are Moses and Jesus (ﷺ). This *āyah* also says that the Muslims do affirm the messages and missions of all the rest of the prophets, such as David and Solomon, Ṣālih, Hūd, Ayyūb, and all the rest of these impeccable historical figures (ﷺ), some of whom we know about, and about most of whom we know nothing.

The reason the Qur’an is mentioned as an object of commitment before the other scriptures are mentioned, even though those other scriptures came chronologically before the Qur’an, is that it is the Qur’an that informs humanity about the preceding scriptures and inspirations. It is also because the Qur’an is inclusive and a combination of the essences of all previous scriptures. The Qur’an is also destined to be Allah’s (ﷻ) living Scripture for eternity, as other scriptures have either been compromised or become irretrievable, and as it represents the final divine dispensation to mankind.

This *āyah* also distinguishes the self-surrendering Muslims from traditional Christians and selective Jews, who are discriminatory about the prophets (ﷺ) they believe in and the scriptures they accept. We declare that we, in principle, are committed to all the historical prophets (ﷺ), and that we believe in the original, uncorrupted scriptures they received, before the interests of the political and religious elites distorted their texts and hijacked their meanings.

Our commitment inevitably translates into a down-to-earth surrender to Allah (ﷻ) as demonstrated in all our human actions and social activism. Coming out of all this integration of scripture, prophets (ﷺ), history, and ideology is the true-to-life *dīn* of Allah (ﷻ), otherwise known as Islam. And whoever tries to impose his own limited system, paradigm, or *dīn* on humanity, or on his own soul, can find no progress and no heavenly acceptance. The result is a total loss.

Allah (ﷻ) Only Endorses and Accepts One *Dīn*: Islam

Take a closer look at the *āyah*, “**And whoever seeks a *dīn* other than self-surrender to Allah, it will not be accepted from him and in the endmost life he shall be among those who failed to win.**”

Self-surrender to Allah (ﷻ) is another way of saying *Islam*. Therefore, whoever seeks a *dīn* (law, ethical code) other than Islam, it will be denied. All human attempts at establishing any other order on earth are bound to fail because they inevitably clash with Allah (ﷻ). The attempted communist *dīn* failed because it disagreed violently with Allah (ﷻ). The capitalist *dīn* is failing because it hypocritically avoids Allah (ﷻ) at some times, and it subtly challenges Him at other times.

Islam is a *dīn*. It is not a daily or weekly ceremonial and religious litany, nor something irrelevant to man’s practical affairs on earth. One aspect of the *dīn* is that it is a chain of command. Allah (ﷻ) is the source of ethics and laws, and humans are the organized benefactors and serious implementors of these integrated principles and laws. If human morals do not proceed into their social range and if human laws are not rooted in their moral conscience, then man has not yet actuated his Islam or self-submission to Allah (ﷻ). Our theoretical belief in Allah (ﷻ), His Prophets (ﷺ) and scriptures, and in the Final Day, will never constitute a *dīn* until we put our theories into practice.

Today’s world is witness to a conjectural and hypothetical “Islam.” There are bureaucracies and regimes that sponsor a talkative and academic “Islam.” There are even rulers who want to apply the Shari’ah (Islamic law) to the lower classes of society while exempting themselves from it. There are, and have been for some time now, attempts to disassemble Islam. On one level, it is pitched against previous scriptures and prophets (ﷺ); on another, it should be subdued to national and racial impulses; and on yet another level it should be “modernized,” which means it should be stripped of its legal and ideological imperatives. All of these and many other similar strategies are designed to create an “Islam” that is not a *dīn*, or to have a *dīn* that is only a mockery of Islam. Hence,

How would Allah bestow His guidance upon people who have resolved to deny the truth after having attained a covenant, and having borne witness that this Apostle is true, and [after] all evidence of the truth has come to them? For Allah does not guide such offending folk. Their requital shall be rejection by Allah, and by the angels, and by all [righteous] men. In this state shall they abide; [and] neither will their suffering be lightened, nor will they be granted respite (3:86–88).

There is, as this *āyah* suggests, a criminal aspect in the behavior of those who refuse to approve what Allah (ﷻ) has given them in the form of guidance and direction. The crime is complicated when they first agree to bind to it and then resolve to reject it. Muhammad (ﷺ) is a clear and vivid presentation of what Allah (ﷻ) has to offer. How can anyone refuse his mission?

The context for the revelation of the above *āyah* relates again to the Yahūd. Before the coming of Muhammad (ﷺ), they spoke of the imminent appearance of a foretold prophet. They even used to brag to the pagans of their knowledge of this coming prophet. But when this Prophet (ﷺ) appeared, they denied the truth about him and his mission, **“Their punishment shall be a condemnation by Allah, and by the angels, and by all [righteous] men.”**

Why should Allah (ﷻ) guide such people as these self-centered Yahūd and national-interest Christians, who, instead of receiving this final prophet with understanding and support, turned against him? In a sense this means that practical Muslims should not be spending their time in the fond hope that Jews and Christians are on the verge of becoming Muslims, as so many Muslims do nowadays. Can they not see that these Yahūdī and Christian characters rejected the Messenger (ﷺ) even as they had scriptural knowledge of his authenticity? They suffered and they still suffer, but they refuse to surrender to Allah (ﷻ), accept Islam, and acknowledge the Qur’an. It is because of this ongoing offense against Muhammad (ﷺ), from those early years to the present time, that they have earned Allah’s (ﷻ) disapprobation and censure; they are also condemned by the

angels and decried by all men of virtue. Because of their offenses and opposition, they have notoriously been expelled from the domain of Allah's (ﷻ) mercy in this world and in the world to come,

You have chosen to conform to idolized images instead of Allah for no other reason than to have a link of love, in the life of this world, between yourselves [and your forebears]; but then, on Resurrection Day, you shall disown one another and curse one another... (29:25).

There are exceptions to this — those who repent, “...except for those that repent after that, and make amends; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (3:89). The Jews and Christians who atone for their opposition to God, prophet, and scripture; those who abandon *kufṛ* and humbly approach Allah (ﷻ); and those who amend their hearts and minds will find that indeed Allah (ﷻ) is All-Forgiving, “...and it is He who accepts repentance from His servants, and pardons bad deeds, and knows all that you do...” (42:25).

Kufṛ seems to have a life of its own. At times this *kufṛ* intensifies and is empowered: it thrives on actions and strategies that contradict human commitment to Allah (ﷻ). Commitment to Allah (ﷻ) also fluctuates in proportion to actions and strategies that affirm Allah (ﷻ). Or, as Allah (ﷻ) says,

Yet whenever a *sūrah* [of this divine Writ] is bestowed from on high, some of the deniers of the truth are prone to ask, “Which of you has this [message] strengthened in his commitment?” Now as for those who are committed [to Allah], it does reinforce their commitment, and they rejoice in the glad tiding [which Allah has given them]. But as for those in whose hearts is disease, each new message but adds another [element of] denial to the denial which they already harbor, and they die while [still] refusing to acknowledge the truth [of Allah’s power presence] (9:124–125).

So the *kāfirs* fall into two categories. There are those who deny Allah (ﷻ) after yielding to Him. Their denial of Allah (ﷻ) takes them into positions that offend Allah (ﷻ) and attack those who are committed to Him. These types will never be guided as long as they are in active opposition to Allah (ﷻ) and His covenant-bearers. They will incur Allah’s (ﷻ) wrath and an everlasting punishment. However if they decide at some point to sincerely yield to Allah (ﷻ) and amend their ways, then there is always room for repentance and amnesty. But they must prove in act and deed that they are correcting past wrongdoings.

Then there are those *kāfirs* for whom repentance is not an option as these are the ones who deny Allah (ﷻ) after making a commitment to Him and then persist in their active denial of Him,

But those who reject faith after they accepted it, and go on adding to their defiance of faith, their repentance will never be accepted, for they are those who have gone astray. As to those who reject faith and die rejecting, never will be accepted from them as much gold as the world contains, even if they offer it as ransom. For them awaits a severe chastisement, and they will find no helpers (3:90–91).

Allah (ﷻ) accepts an atonement that comes from a practical repudiation of *kufr*. Allah (ﷻ) will not look favorably upon their repentance if they stage it when they are in the throes of death,

Repentance shall not be accepted from those who do evil deeds until their dying hour and then say, “Behold, I now repent;” nor from those who die as deniers of Allah — it is these for whom We have readied grievous suffering (4:18).

A hadith to this effect states, “Certainly, Allah will accept a subject’s repentance as long as it is not offered at the moment of death.”¹²²

Those who die in a state of denying and rejecting Allah (ﷻ) will not be redeemed. If this type of *kāfir* dies, nothing can deliver him from the consequences of his rejection of Allah (ﷻ),

Verily, if those who are in a state of denying Allah had all that is on earth, and twice as much, to offer as ransom from suffering on the Day of Resurrection, it would not be accepted from them, for grievous suffering awaits them (5:36).

According to a hadith,

*A kāfir will be summoned for his account on the Day of Resurrection. He will be asked, "If you were to have the world full of gold, would you spend it to ransom yourself?" He [would] answer, "Yes." Then he will be told, "But you were asked to do less than that [and you did not]."*¹²³

A Special Quality of Islam Is to Give from What You Cherish

But as for you, [who are committed to Allah] never shall you attain to true virtue unless you spend on others out of what you cherish yourselves; and whatever you spend — verily, Allah has full knowledge thereof (3:92).

The psycho-social transformation that was engendered by adhering to Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and His Book was profound. This *āyah* inspired that first generation of Muslims around the Prophet (ﷺ) to give generously of what they had. The materialistic possessive self that predominates in today's world had been banished. There was a war on poverty and that war was first won deep down inside human nature where poverty is rooted in the attitudes of those who have rejected Allah's (ﷻ) lively presence in social affairs. Those early pioneers of Islam understood that poverty can be defeated by giving; and give they did. Some of these acts of generosity are reviewed below.

A man by the name of Abū Ṭalḥah owned most of the date palm trees in Madinah. One of his most prized date palm groves was called Beyruḥā’, a well known orchard in Madinah. This woodlet of trees was opposite the Prophet’s (ﷺ) masjid. At times the Prophet (ﷺ) would enter this orchard and drink from its soothing water. When this āyah was revealed, Abū Ṭalḥah told Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ), “My most treasured possession is Beyruḥā’. And I donate it for the cause of Allah. I intend it to be an act of virtue and redemption in Allah’s sight. So, O Prophet of Allah, do with it as you please, and as Allah would instruct you.” Muhammad (ﷺ) said, “*Bakhin, bakhin [words of approval, admiration, and gratification]. Your asset is full of reward. I have listened to what you said. I suggest you give it to your relatives [who are in need].*” And Abū Ṭalḥah said he would. He apportioned it among his cousins and relatives.¹²⁴ Some scholars took this to mean that if one gives to relatives in need, he would personally feel better about it, having no regrets about it, and secondly, according to other prophetic recommendations, relatives in need are more worthy of it.

In another expression of unselfishness ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, “O Messenger of Allah! I have never had money as precious as my share in Khaybar. What do you advise me to do with it?” The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*Keep the land and pass on the produce.*”¹²⁵

This āyah summarizes it all. Virtue is ascertained by one’s willingness to part with excess finances. The level of an individual’s righteousness is measured by his spending of the best that he has. A committed Muslim is expected to release from his possession whatever he considers most dear or most valuable, “**O you who are committed to Allah! Spend on others out of the good things you may have acquired (2:267).**”

In an Islamic society, this āyah defines a social norm; it does not refer to isolated individualistic preferences. And if it was successfully done once it can be successfully done again. When there is enough altruism to go around there will no longer be poverty that forces people into vice and crime. This is the task that has become our destiny.

Commitment Quality of Muslims versus Ahl al-Kitāb

The remaining *āyāt* of *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān* can be divided into four major discourses. The first one, 3:93–3:120, presents contrasting statements between the committed Muslims and people of scripture in Madinah. This dispute probably took place after the conclusive military encounter between the committed Muslims and the *mushriks* of Makkah at Badr during Ramaḍān in the second year of the Hijrah; and the battle of Uḥud in the month of Shawwāl during the third year AH. This “war of words” between the committed Muslims and the scripturalists of Madinah has already been discussed in the first half of *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān*. Out of this clash of concepts, the idea and meaning of *dīn* and Islam emerged with uncommon clarity. The continuity of the everlasting message of Allah (ﷻ) was established, and the “monopolizing” of scripture by the People of the Book was exposed. The “Christian” and “Jewish” arguments with Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) were placed in the light of clear guidance for everyone to understand; and the active collusion of these people of earlier revelation was exposed. Muslims were warned to be on guard against these types of scripturalists.

The second discourse, 3:121–3:179, which occupies a considerable part of the *sūrah*, moves onto the battlefield. No longer would the forces of disagreement and opposition argue against content with the superior position outlined in this sacred Writ; now the couriers of scriptural inaccuracies and their *mushrik* allies would become warriors ready to challenge the Muslims on the field of battle. The abiding Script describes the battle of Uḥud and its aftermath. These *āyāt* were revealed after the battle and illuminate its particular context and background. They can refresh and recharge our commitment to Allah (ﷻ), as those front-line Muslims broke new ground for all succeeding generations. There were human mistakes and equivocation, and these were pointed out by Allah (ﷻ). There was rank-and-file disruption which was also singled out. Despite all this, the *mu’mins* under arms had to do their best, and they did. They bore the consequences and they pulled themselves out of what was becoming a military defeat. They held on to their

faith and their trust, and then were grateful for whatever outcome they had to endure as a result of their negligence and misjudgement.

The third cluster of *āyāt*, 3:180–3:189, returns to the scriptural people. It refers to their failure to honor their word with Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ). This concerns the agreement they signed with the Prophet (ﷺ) when he first came to Madinah. They were judged unfit to carry the Covenant because of the criminal attitude they displayed with the prior prophets (ﷺ) sent to them. All of this is explained by Allah (ﷻ) so that the Muslims could avoid carelessly slipping into these modes of thought. Committed Muslims have to be ready to make the personal and material sacrifices that come from their principled position. This Qur’anic explanation of the early Muslims’ experiences teaches today’s Muslims that confrontational “scripturalists” and *mushriks* will never give up their attempts to harm the Muslims and their just cause.

The fourth discourse, 3:190–3:200, nourishes our minds with information about the relationship between Allah (ﷻ) and His devout and disciplined subjects. It shows how the subjects of Allah (ﷻ) are located in a vast universe that brings them closer to Allah (ﷻ) the more they learn about it; and how Allah (ﷻ) responds to their ardor, fidelity, and love with His faithfulness, regard, and respect.

The *sūrah* ends on a note of patience, perseverance, and a reminder of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence. The collective and individual consciousness of this reality is the way to success.

- (3:93) All food was lawful for the Children of Israel, save what Israel [Ya‘qūb] made unlawful for them [by their sinning] before the Torah was bestowed from on high. Say, “Come forward, then, with the Torah and recite it, if what you say is true!”
- (3:94) And all who henceforth invent lies about Allah, it is they, they who are offenders!
- (3:95) Say, “Allah has spoken the truth: follow, then, the *millah* (world-course and worldview) of Ibrāhīm, who was not of the *mushriks*.”

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حَلَالًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى
 نَفْسِهِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَةُ ۗ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِالتَّوْرَةِ فَاتْلُوهَا إِن كُنْتُمْ
 صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَمَنْ أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ
 هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قُلْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ
 مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى
 لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾ فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مِّمَّا مَقَّامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۗ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ ءَامِنًا ۗ
 وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ
 اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ قُلْ يَتَّهَلَّوْنَ بِالْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ
 وَاللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلَىٰ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ قُلْ يَتَّهَلَّوْنَ بِالْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَنِ
 سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ تَبِعُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَأَنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءُ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا
 تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ يَتَّيِّبُهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَطِيعُوا فَرِيقًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
 الْكِتَابَ يَرُدُّوكُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُتْلَىٰ
 عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِمِ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَىٰ
 صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ يَتَّيِّبُهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ ۚ وَلَا تَمُونَّ
 إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۗ

وَأَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ
 بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ
 يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَلَتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى
 الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ
 ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ
 وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾ يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَسَوْدٌ وُجُوهٌ فَمَّا
 الَّذِينَ أَسْوَدَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا
 كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ أَبْيَضَتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَبِمَا رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا
 خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا
 لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ
 ﴿١٠٩﴾ كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ
 عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ
 خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِّنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ لَنْ
 يَضُرُّكُمْ إِلَّا آذَىٌ وَإِنْ يُقْتَلُوا يُوَلَّوْكُمْ الْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ
 ﴿١١١﴾ ضَرَبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةَ أَيْنَ مَا تُقِفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلِ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلِ مِنْ

النَّاسِ وَبَاءَ وَبِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ
 كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا
 وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ ❁ لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ
 يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ ءَاتَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِاللَّهِ
 وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسْرِعُونَ
 فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ مِنَ الصَّٰلِحِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ
 فَلَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
 النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
 كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتُهُ
 وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلٰكِنْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا
 تَتَّخِذُوا بَطَانَةً مِّنْ دُونِكُمْ لَا يَأْلُونَكُمْ خَبَالًا وَدُّوا مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ
 الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِي صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ
 إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ هَٰئِنتُمْ أَوْلَآءَ تُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ
 بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّهِ وَإِذَا لَقُوكُمْ قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا عَصَوْا عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا نَمِيلَ

مِنَ الْغَيْطِ ۚ قُلْ مُوتُوا بِغَيْطِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١١٩﴾ ۚ إِنَّ تَمَسَّكُمْ
 حَسَنَةٌ سَأَوْهُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تَصِّرُوا
 وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

- (3:96) Behold, the first Temple ever set up for mankind was indeed the one at Bakkah: rich in blessing, and a [source of] guidance unto all the worlds, full of clear *āyāt*.
- (3:97) [It is] the place whereon Ibrāhīm once stood; and whoever enters it finds security. Hence pilgrimage to the Temple is a duty owed to Allah by all people who are able to undertake it. And as for those who deny [Allah] — verily, Allah does not stand in need of anything in all the worlds.
- (3:98) Say, “O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you refuse to acknowledge the truth of Allah’s [power] manifestations, when Allah is witness to all that you do?”
- (3:99) Say, “O followers of earlier revelation! Why do you [endeavor to] bar those who have come to commit [to this divine Writ] from the path of Allah by trying to make it appear crooked, when you yourselves bear witness [to its being straight]? For, Allah is not unaware of what you do.”
- (3:100) O you who are securely committed [to Allah]! If you pay heed to some of those to whom revelation was vouchsafed aforetime, they might cause you to renounce the truth after you have come to commit [to it].
- (3:101) And how could you deny the truth when it is to you that Allah’s *āyāt* are being conveyed, and it is in your midst that His Apostle lives? But he who holds fast unto Allah has already been guided onto a straight way.
- (3:102) O you who have become securely committed [to Allah]! Be overcautious of Allah [and His retribution] as is

due to Him, and do not allow death to overtake you before you have surrendered yourselves unto Him.

- (3:103) And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with Allah, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren; and [how, when] you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it. In this way Allah makes clear His messages to you, so that you might find guidance,
- (3:104) And that there might grow out of you a community [of people] who invite unto all that is good, and command [and authorize] the doing of what is right and forbid [and delegitimize] the doing of what is wrong: and it is they, they who shall be successful!
- (3:105) And be not like those who have drawn apart from one another and have taken to conflicting views after all evidence of the truth has come to them; these are the ones for whom tremendous suffering is in store on the Day [of Judgment],
- (3:106) When some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief]. And as for those with faces darkened, [they shall be told], “Did you deny the truth after being committed to Allah? Taste, then, this suffering for denying the truth!”
- (3:107) But as for those with faces shining, they shall be within Allah’s grace, therein to abide.
- (3:108) These are Allah’s *āyāt*. We convey them to you, setting forth the truth, since Allah wills no wrong to His creation.
- (3:109) And unto Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth; and all things go back to Allah [as their source].
- (3:110) You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for humanity [for its well being]: you require [and authorize] the doing of the common good and

- you disallow [and interdict] the common wrong, and you are committed to Allah. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] divine commitment, it would have been for their own good; [but only few] among them are such committed believers, while most of them are iniquitous.
- (3:111) [But] these can never inflict more than a passing hurt on you; and if they fight against you, they will turn their backs upon you [in flight], and will not be succored.
 - (3:112) Overshadowed by ignominy are they wherever they may be, save [when they bind themselves again] in a bond with Allah and a bond with men; for they have earned the burden of Allah's condemnation, and are overshadowed by humiliation; all this [has befallen them] because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah's *āyāt* and in slaying the prophets against all right: all this, because they rebelled [against Allah], and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right.
 - (3:113) [But] they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation there are upright people, who follow Allah's *āyāt* throughout the night, and prostrate themselves [before Him].
 - (3:114) They are committed to Allah and the Last Day, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: and these are among the righteous.
 - (3:115) And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof, for Allah has full knowledge of those who are cautious [of His power].
 - (3:116) [But], behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth [of Allah's power], neither their worldly possessions nor their children will in the least avail them against Allah, and it is they who are destined for the Fire, therein to abide.
 - (3:117) The parable of what they spend on the life of this world is that of an icy wind, which smites the tith of people who have sinned against themselves, and destroys it; for

it is not Allah who does them wrong, but it is they who are wronging themselves.

- (3:118) O you who have committed [to Allah]! Do not take for your bosom friends people who are not of your commitment-quality. They spare no effort to corrupt you; they would love to see you in distress. Vehement hatred has already come into the open from out of their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is yet worse. We have indeed made the *āyāt* [thereof] clear to you, if you would but use your reason.
- (3:119) Lo! It is you who [are prepared to] love them, but they will not love you, although you believe in all of the revelation. And when they meet you, they assert, “We believe [as you believe];” but when they find themselves alone, they gnaw their fingers in rage against you. Say, “Perish in your rage! Behold, Allah has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men]!”
- (3:120) If good fortune comes to you, it grieves them; and if evil befalls you, they rejoice in it. But if you are patient in adversity and consciously cautious [of Allah’s power], their guile cannot harm you at all, for verily Allah encompasses [with His might] all that they do (Āl ‘Imrān:93–120).

In the discourse above, the polarization of positions between committed Muslims and non-committed people of scripture is described. These *āyāt* do not fit into the context of the Christian missionary delegation that came to the Prophet (ﷺ) from Najrān. This discourse takes the dialogue between Muslims, Jews, and Christians to its logical end. The gist of these lessons is essentially addressed to the Yahūd. These convenient scripturalists were a thorn in the side of the growing Islamic social order in Madinah; and some of them were also a dagger in its back. This discussion ought to make it clear to Muslims that they should never aspire to have a buddy-buddy relationship with ideological Jews and Christians. Both blocs of people are distinct and separate. This the “Jews” and “Christians” take as a given; it seems that the “Muslims” are the only ones who have

difficulties understanding this fact. The sermon of these Qur'anic words turns to the listening Muslims, and emphasizes the independent and responsible character of being Muslim. This was previously described in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, after Allah (ﷻ) expounded the personality of Banū Isrā'īl. There seems to be a need every time “Jews” and “Christians” are carefully exposed in the Qur'an to drive home the point that Muslims should consider themselves independent of their scriptural predecessors, who have strayed from their relationship with God and from righteous dealing with His servants.

One important point in this discourse is that the various proscriptions placed on the Jews were a result of their fractiousness; they were not intended for all human beings, for all time. Another one is the response to the Yahūdī objection to the Ka'bah being designated as the new *qiblah* of the Muslims, a matter that was the subject of several *āyāt* in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*. They could not reconcile themselves to the fact that Makkah was the city of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). So the Qur'an reinforced the fact that the Ka'bah in Makkah was the sanctuary of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ). Those Jews who claim descent from him should know better than to deny this fact.

This is followed by a renunciation of scripturalists who deny Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in the affairs of humanity. They are also condemned by Allah's (ﷻ) words for obstructing His divine plan. These scripturalists have no inclination to straightforwardness with Allah (ﷻ). Even though they know the truth about God, they go about milking life of all its benefits while ignoring their duties and responsibilities. These types of scripturalists are given an ultimatum because of their stubborn objection to Allah's (ﷻ) earthly power presence. The vulnerable Muslims are told not to be swept away by what amounts to flagrant *kufri*, the backbone of the materialistic scripturalists. Muslims will not be able to offer any excuses: His book has been placed in their hands, and *taqwā* is a central component of their commitment to Allah (ﷻ). Muslims are expected to be the commanders and implementers of the common good while being at odds with the common wrong. With this responsibility placed on Muslims, there is no room for distracting chatter from straying scripturalists. If Muslims lend their ear to such

talk they will slip into divisions and destruction. Some narratives say that the words of caution to Muslims in this context were revealed in response to an attempt by the Yahūd to provoke conflict between the clans of Aws and Khazraj.

The words of Allah (ﷻ) elevate the Muslims to their rightful rank, **“You are the best fellowship to be integrated into humanity as you demand the common good and you interdict the common repugnance, while you are committed to Allah.”** When the Muslims are determined to promote the *ma‘rūf* and repress the *munkar*, they become the best order of people in the world.

The words of the Qur’an reassure the Muslims they have nothing to worry about. Their enemies will never be able to colonize or control them. The forces of *kufr* may wage wars but they cannot put a dent in Islam. Allah’s (ﷻ) enemies will suffer even if they are armed to the teeth with the latest weapons and the most advanced technology. When they go against Allah (ﷻ), by fighting those humans who have become the Will of Allah (ﷻ) on earth, they are doomed. Their history is littered with bad intentions, disobedience, and attempts to kill the Prophets of Allah (ﷺ). These scripturalists do have their exceptions. Some of them adhere to the truth and commit themselves to it; these are the virtuous ones. As for those who insist on denying Allah’s (ﷻ) authority in worldly affairs, their assets and armies will not protect them from this power they will eventually come to acknowledge, when it is too late.

The discourse ends with an exhortation — the Muslims should never surround themselves with those whose allegiances are to other than Allah (ﷻ) and truth. These people wish for all kinds of harm upon the Muslims. Their words are intended to deceive; yet the fire of resentment within their hearts longs to incinerate the Islamic will to be, the Islamic will to do, and the Islamic will to prosper. When Muslims are happy and doing well these historical enemies are infuriated, and when Muslims are in difficulties they are pleased. We can only be patient while we do Allah’s (ﷻ) will on earth; the combination of this type of patience with our work in the field will neutralize the most perilous of their plots and exploits. These lessons were not intended only for that first generation of

Muslims in Arabia hundreds of years ago; they are also intended for all generations of Muslims, all over the world, for all of human history to the Last Day.

Argumentation as a Cover for Rejection of Muhammad (ﷺ)

All food was ritually fit [for consumption] for the Children of Israel, save what Israel proscribed unto them [because of their sinning] before the Torah was bestowed from on high. Say, “Come forward, then, with the Torah and recite it, if what you say is true!” And all who, from now on, contrive lies about Allah, it is they, they who are offenders! (3:93–94).

Here again, in these two *āyāt* and in later ones in this section, the Qur’an responds to questions raised about Islam by the Yahūd. As on other issues, the Yahūd were looking for any issue they could raise to massage their collective ego on one hand, and to hit at the Islamic mission of Muhammad (ﷺ) on the other. When the Qur’an had made it clear that it endorses previous scriptures, the Torah included, they responded by demanding to know why the Qur’an certified certain foods as edible that were banned for the Jews.

The Qur’an answers them directly and straightforwardly, ignoring their determination to cast aspersions on it. Allah’s (ﷻ) words tell them, and those who listen to its message, that even though it is a confirmation of the Torah, those who accept it are allowed certain foods that were not allowed to the descendants of Israel (ﷺ). It reminds the Yahūd and others that all foods were permitted to the people of Israel except for what Israel (ﷺ) made unlawful to eat before the Torah was revealed. Israel is Jacob (ﷺ). According to some accounts in Muslim literature, he fell ill and his health began to deteriorate, at which point he vowed that if Allah (ﷻ) would heal him he would, voluntarily, avoid camel flesh and dairy products, which he was fond of. Allah (ﷻ) accepted his vow. This became a dietary standard for the Children of Israel who set-

tled on following and doing whatever Israel (ﷺ) had done.¹²⁶ Allah (ﷻ) also prohibited them from eating other foods because of their sinfulness and offenses. These have been specified more in the *āyah* from *Sūrah al-An‘ām* when Allah (ﷻ) says,

And [only] unto those who followed the Jewish faith did We forbid all beasts that have claws; and We forbade unto them the fat of both oxen and sheep, excepting that which is in their backs or entrails or that which is within the bone: thus did We requite them for their offenses — for, behold, We are true to Our word! (6:146).

The Qur’an goes on to invite Muslims to challenge these Yahūdīs to refer to the Torah and to realize that the restrictions on them were responses to their misbehavior, not general restraints on all human beings and all societies. **“Say, ‘Come forward, then, with the Torah and recite it, if what you say is true!’”**

This is of course part of the long Yahūdī effort in Madinah and Arabia at that time to persuade people that Muhammad (ﷺ) was a fraud who was pretending to be a prophet in the tradition of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and his offspring. Thus they accused him of exposing his own disqualifications by being inconsistent with the Torah and the Israeli tradition, in this case by pouncing on the issue of dietary regulations. In effect, they were saying that Muhammad (ﷺ) was legalizing the unlawful by tampering with Israeli dietary rules, such as approving the consumption of camel meat. One hadith relates that on one occasion, the Jews in Madinah said to the Prophet (ﷺ), “But how can you be [Allah’s Messenger] while you eat camel meat and its milk products?” Muhammad (ﷺ) replied, “*They [meat and milk] were permissible to Ibrāhīm and so we too allow it.*” They replied by saying, “Rather everything that we proscribe nowadays was so for Noah and Abraham and that is the way it has always been until we inherited that tradition today.”¹²⁷ It was in this debate that Allah (ﷻ) had the final word, saying, **“All food was valid for the Children of Israel, except what Israel made invalid to himself...”**¹²⁸ With the exception of the prohibition of blood (Leviticus, 17:10–14), no def-

inite reason is given for these prohibitions either in the Bible or in rabbinical literature.¹²⁹

The Ḥaram Is a Sanctuary for All Humanity

The issue of the *qiblah* is another one on which the Yahūd tried to cause trouble for the Prophet (ﷺ) and his followers. They could not reconcile themselves to the fact that after 16 or 17 months in which Muhammad (ﷺ) prayed toward al-Quds (Jerusalem), the traditional *qiblah* of the Jews, he “changed his mind” and began praying toward Makkah. This whole issue was dealt with at length in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, but still these unrelenting and recalcitrant Yahūd tried to bring it up from time to time. The Muslims had to prove that al-Quds and Makkah are in effect equivalent Holy Cities, symbols of the same cause. They did this by orienting themselves in prayer toward either of these two Abrahamic cities. Finally, on the command of Allah (ﷻ), they gave priority to Makkah. But because of the self-centered racism of Israeli Judaism, the Yahūd in Madinah were itching for an argument on this issue. Their primary concern was to confuse the Muslims’ minds and shake the Muslims’ faith, the same way their successors today pick on certain issues to confuse their largely unsuspecting audiences about Islam. The issues of slavery and the status of women in Islam are modern equivalents to the way in which the Yahūd of Madinah used the issue of the *qiblah* to attack Islam. Allah’s (ﷻ) answer to these storytellers and fabricators is,

Say, “Allah has spoken the truth: follow, then, the *millaḥ* (world-course and worldview) of Ibrāhīm, who was not of the *mushriks*.” Behold, the first Temple ever founded for mankind was indeed the one at Bakkah: rich in blessing, and a [source of] guidance to all the worlds, full of clear *āyāt*. [It is] the place whereon Ibrāhīm once stood; and whoever enters it finds security. Hence, pilgrimage to the Temple is a duty due to Allah by all people who are able to embark upon it. And

as for those who deny Allah, verily Allah does not stand in need of anything in all the worlds (3:95–97).

The Jews make a big deal of their claim to be the heirs to Abraham (ﷺ). They define their relationship with Abraham (ﷺ) as one of racial and ethnic affinity. This must be regarded as questionable, considering the demographic and racial makeup of today's Zionist Israeli nation-state, which is supposed to be the in-gathering of Jews from around the world. The passage of time between the age of Abraham (ﷺ) and our age has resulted in there being no such thing as "racial purity." So the Qur'an offers everyone a post-racial relationship with Ibrāhīm: follow Ibrāhīm's (ﷺ) line of action, take on his independent character, and do not be distracted by forces inimical to God that conflict with His will. It is the doing of all these things that can guarantee anyone a relationship with Abraham (ﷺ), and not some claim to racial superiority or exclusivism.

Then the *āyah* moves on to state clearly that the Ka'bah in Makkah is the first and foremost sanctuary dedicated to the service of Allah (ﷻ) on earth. It was Allah (ﷻ) who instructed Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) to raise up its foundations and to devote it to the mobile, the stationary, and to those who are in allegiance and obedience to Allah (ﷻ). This Holy Sanctuary was rendered by Allah (ﷻ) as an area of guidance and blessings for all humanity. It is also called the Inviolable House. Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā'il (ﷺ) erected this structure as instructed by Allah (ﷻ),

And [recall] when Ibrāhīm and Ismā'il were raising the foundations of the Temple, [they prayed], "O our Sustainer! Accept You this from us, for verily, You alone are All-Hearing, All-Knowing!" (2:127).

Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā was built centuries later in Jerusalem. Information about the construction of al-Masjid al-Aqṣā suggests that it was built about 1,005 years before the time of 'Īsā, during the reign of Sulaymān (ﷺ). Historically and chronologically, the *qiblah* of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) in Makkah precedes the *qiblah* in Jerusalem.

There are some distinguishing features about this impregnable house. Firstly, it is a place of blessings and thanksgiving. Secondly, it is a base for guidance. Muslims from around the world go there by any means possible, for their Hajj and ‘Umrah. This is a reaffirmation of Ibrāhīm’s (ﷺ) relationship with them and their relationship with him. Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) said,

“O our Sustainer! Behold, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley in which there is no arable land, close to Your sanctified Temple, so that, O our Sustainer, they might devote themselves to You. Cause You, therefore, peoples’ hearts to incline toward them, and grant them fruitful sustenance, so that they might have cause to be grateful” (14:37).

And Allah (ﷻ) responded to Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) by saying,

Hence, proclaim you unto all people the [duty of] pilgrimage; they will come to you on foot and on every [kind of] fast mount, coming from every faraway point [on earth], so that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them, and that they might extol the name of Allah on the days appointed [for sacrifice], over whatever heads of cattle He may have provided for them [to this end]. Eat, then, thereof, and feed the [underprivileged] poor (22:27–28).

Thirdly, this place is also an area that illustrates Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence on earth: the platform of Ibrāhīm (ﷺ) and the serenity and security due to it. And fourthly, the Holy Sanctuary is a security zone. Anyone who enters therein should feel safe from any type of offense or aggression. There can be no shedding of blood in that zone; the fact that there has been, thanks to the Saudi royals, is something for which they will have to answer to Allah (ﷻ) in due course. Even the pre-Islamic Arabians had more respect for the Ḥaram than the post-Islamic Saudi officials — they

did not kill anyone in that zone even if the individual was a target of revenge or wanted by the law. This is an issue on which Allah's (ﷻ) words are clear,

Are they, then, not aware that We have set up a sanctuary secure [for those who are committed to us], the while all around them men are being carried away [by fear and despair]? (29:67).

Why — have We not established for them a sanctuary secure...?” (28:57).

And Lo! We made the Temple a goal to which people might return again and again, and a sanctuary... (2:125).

Ibrāhīm also called upon Allah (ﷻ) to render Makkah a safe and secure environment, **“And, lo, Ibrāhīm prayed, ‘O my Sustainer! Make this a land secure, and grant its people fruitful sustenance...’” (2:126).**

The main feature of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is supposed to be its peace and security. But under Saudi control it has turned into an ordinary *masjid*; and one, what is more, that is government-operated and government-controlled. Even in the days of *jāhiliyah* the custodians of the Ḥaram offered anyone free access and it was an approachable refuge for anyone; not even a confirmed criminal could be arrested in those holy precincts until he stepped outside. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, “If I were to catch up with the assassin of al-Khaṭṭāb in it [the Ḥaram] I would not harm him until he leaves it.”¹³⁰ Imam Abū Ḥanifaḥ said,

Whoever incurs the death penalty by reason of judicial retribution, *riddah*... and then seeks refuge in the Ḥaram should not be seized there. While there, though, he should not be given accommodations, food, water, or support so that he may consider leaving sooner rather than later. The pre-Islamic Arabians were unanimous in

their sanctity of this Ḥaram — a fugitive murderer if found in the Ḥaram would be considered in a safe and secure zone as long as he stayed in it.¹³¹

Compare these standards, rooted in the Abrahamic tradition and reconfirmed in the Qur’an, with the behavior of the Saudi royals nowadays. During the month of al-Muḥarram (1400AH) which itself is a sacred month of the Muslim calendar, the Saudi forces laid siege to the Ḥaram, because there were “insubordinate” Muslims there. Most of those inside the Ḥaram were Muslims from Arabia, some of whom were reported to be National Guardsmen, in addition to Muslims from other countries. After a stand-off, the Saudi government is reported to have turned to non-Muslim military “experts” (some reports say French, others say German) to shed Muslim blood and kill Muslims in and around the Ḥaram. The Saudis and their *mushrik* connections killed at a place, the Ḥaram, and a time, al-Muḥarram, when and where there should have been total peace and tranquillity.¹³²

On another occasion, when Muslims from Islamic Iran came to the Hajj and wanted to implement the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) by publicly and peacefully declaring their and other Muslims’ independence and disavowal of the *mushriks*, the Saudi minister of intelligence at the time, Prince Nayef, ordered the Saudi military not to let them into the Ḥaram. Saudi policemen formed a wall in front of the advancing Muslims, and then opened fire. The Ministry of the Interior forces were also involved. During another sacred month, Dhū al-Ḥijjah, the Ḥaram was again turned into a war zone. The Saudi-supervised carnage in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in one of the sacred months resulted in 402 dead pilgrims and around 1,000 wounded. Yet Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*Whoever enters the masjid is safe.*” Kings Khālid and Fahd, under whose rule these massacres occurred, are even lower than al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī.¹³³

There is another dimension to this issue of violence in the area of the Ḥaram, and that is responding to violence initiated by others. Initiating violence in or around the Ḥaram is a crime and a sin; but acting against it, as an act of self-defense, is permissible. Explaining

this Allah (ﷻ) says, **“And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of dedication unless they fight against you there first; but if they fight against you, put them to death...”** (2:190).

Another feature of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is its openness for all its visitors during Hajj and ‘Umrah. It is alien to the spirit of brotherhood within the Ummah to restrict access and freedom of assembly in and around Makkah. Anyone who reads the *āyāt* of the Qur’an with an open mind can emphatically ascertain that Makkah is an open city, that the Ḥaram is an open sanctuary, and that the Muslims are duty bound to go there whenever their circumstances permit it. Some may have legitimate reasons for not being able to go for Hajj or ‘Umrah — some may be ill, others may be living in circumstances of war that may endanger them if they try to cross through enemy territory to reach Makkah and Madinah. Other Muslims may be exempted from this duty simply because they do not have the money and the means to make it to Hajj and ‘Umrah, or because of physical or other disabilities.

Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, *“Whoever is in possession of enough food and transportation to get him to Allah’s House [the Ḥaram in Makkah] and yet declines to go, his death is on par with a Jew or a Christian.”*¹³⁴ This is in effect a comment on the *āyah* that says, **“Hence, pilgrimage to the Ḥaram is a duty indebted to Allah by all people who are able to perform it”** (3:97). Many first- and second-generation Muslims understood *the ability to go to Hajj* to mean the securing of food and transportation.

The last sentence of this *āyah* is, **“And for those who deny Allah, verily Allah does not stand in need of anything in all the worlds.”** There appears to be a consensus among Muslim scholars that anyone who is able to perform the Hajj but unwilling to do so may fall in the category of denying Allah (ﷻ). The tenor of the *āyah* is unmistakable: going to the Hajj is a priority and a necessity. Those who diminish its priority, lessen its necessity, or dilute its urgency are courting *kufr*.

Today there are nuclear-free zones as well as war-free zones. But the Ḥaram is an aversion-free zone. During the days of *jāhiliyah*, a killer would place a piece of wool around his neck and enter the

Ḥaram; this killer would meet the son of his victim, but the son would do nothing as long as they were in the precincts of the Ḥaram.¹³⁵ The serenity and tranquillity of the Ḥaram meant that no one could hunt birds there, or disturb birds’ nests, or cut down trees or plants. On the day that the Prophet (ﷺ) liberated Makkah, he is reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim to have said,

*This region has been sanctified and hallowed since the day Allah created the heavens and the earth. Due to this divine sanctity and holiness it shall remain as such until the Day of Resurrection. Killing has never been countenanced for anyone in it before me. And for me it was not countenanced except for a fugitive moment. It is consecrated by Allah’s sanctum until the Day of Resurrection. Its thorns [from such vegetation] may not be sheared, its game [animals hunted for food] may not be disturbed, lost items within it may only be touched [claimed] by their owner...*¹³⁶

What is particularly interesting about the wording of the *āyah* is that Allah (ﷻ) makes it clear that the Ḥaram is a sanctuary for all humanity. It is open for all races and peoples; it is even unrestricted to Jews, who made it a “controversial” issue. Even the Yahūdī rumor-mongers are invited to this sanctuary if they turn away from their racist mind-set and accept the final message brought by Abraham’s true successor, Muhammad (ﷺ). If they choose to remain racists for Jerusalem, they should at least know that Muslims are anti-racists for Makkah, Madinah, and al-Quds. Designating the Ḥaram as a place of retreat for mankind is much like saying that the doors of Makkah should be open and the Ḥaram should be accessible to all who are willing to surrender their lives to Allah (ﷻ) and infuse their will with His. Turning down this worldwide invitation is tantamount to *kufr*.

What about the restrictions imposed by officials in Arabia, in America, and around the world on people who want to orient themselves to Makkah and who want to conform to Allah (ﷻ), expressing that by their journey to Makkah? These Arabian

Americans and American Arabians are the gatekeepers of *kufr* and the doormen of *jāhiliyah*, even if some of them perform religious rituals in *masjids*, and others go through similar mechanical ceremonies in churches and synagogues.

The fact is well established in many *āyāt*: Hajj is every Muslim's duty. He or she should go to Makkah and the Holy Lands at least once in a lifetime, when he has the opportunity to do so and good health, security, and circumstances are conducive for such a venture. Some scholarly opinions state that this *āyah* was revealed during the ninth year of the Hijrah, the year of incoming delegations known as '*Ām al-Wufūd*. They maintain that the Hajj became compulsory after that ninth year of the Hijrah, citing the Prophet (ﷺ) sole Hajj after that year to substantiate their point of view. Others maintain that the Hajj has always been compulsory and the Prophet (ﷺ) did not undertake it before because of the prevailing conditions and circumstances. One such consideration was that the *mushriks* who were in charge of Makkah used to perform the Hajj naked. This was dealt with when *Sūrah Barā'ah* (also known as *Sūrah al-Tawbah*) was revealed during the ninth year of the Hijrah. The following year, the Prophet (ﷺ) went for his Hajj. However, going for the Hajj may have been the norm earlier than this. For this reason, some scholarly opinions hold that this *āyah* was revealed in the first few years after the Hijrah, at about the time of the Uḥud military campaign.¹³⁷

Be that as it may, what is clear is that Hajj is now mandatory and that able-bodied Muslims must consider it their duty. The Hajj is supposed to be an annual gathering where Muslim hearts and minds meet. It is during this yearly give-and-take that Muslims express their brotherhood and solidarity. But at present, that remains a theory only; nowadays the "kingdom of Saudi Arabia" expects Muslims to behave like herds of cattle. They are corralled into Makkah and then they are hastily expelled from the Ḥaram and its environs. No expression of fraternity or common purpose is tolerated by the *neo-jāhili* Saudi royals, whose custody of the Ḥaramayn in Makkah and Madinah is more in the tradition of Abū Lahab and Abū Jahl than it is in the Sunnah of Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ).

The Saudi siege of Makkah is not only physical. These Saudi servants of *mushriks* spread the word through their network of hired hands and paid peers to expunge from Muslim discourse the *kitāb* and *sunnah* incentives that encourage Muslims to go to Makkah. One such example that does not circulate in Saudi-sponsored circles is a hadith that suggests Muslims should aim to fulfill their Hajj duties every five years. The hadith, in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Ibn Ḥabbān and al-Bayhaqī on the authority of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, states,

Allah (ﷻ) says, “A human subject for whom I have given an able body and plentiful bounty, if this human subject permits a lapse of five years without coming to Me [at the Ḥaram], is a deprived person.”¹³⁸

There is a technical matter that has to be clarified. Hajj is not like *ṣalāh*. If the time of *ṣalāh* lapses, a person may make up for it later. In *fiqhī* terms this is called *qaḍā’*. That is because *ṣalāh* is a daily duty. Hajj, however, is a lifetime duty. And during a lifetime some individuals may be able to go to Hajj one year, but then may delay it to a following year, and this is perfectly acceptable. But what is not acceptable and should not be tolerated is to take advantage of this “concession” and to “choke off” the human waves that want to go to Makkah each year to fulfill their Hajj responsibility. And this has become the precise policy that today’s Muslims — if and when they feel capable of going to the Ḥaram in Makkah — are forced to acquiesce to because they have no input into the policy positions related to the management of the Hajj. The *fiqh* literature describe a person who procrastinates in performing his Hajj obligation for a few years as being a *fāsiq*. In other words the completion of a personal Hajj is a high priority. The *āyāt* and hadiths on this issue are compelling,

Therefore, pilgrimage to the Temple is an obligation due to Allah by all people... (3:97).

And accomplish the Hajj and the ‘Umrah [only] to Allah... (2:196).

The complementary hadiths are,

*Go to the Hajj before you are unable to go to the Hajj.*¹³⁹

*Make haste and go to the Hajj; for no one knows what may happen to him.*¹⁴⁰

*Whoever is not kept back by an illness or an obvious need or difficulty or by a repressive regime and does not go to the Hajj, then he may choose to die a Jew or a Christian.*¹⁴¹

*Whoever is in possession of enough food and transportation to get him to Allah's Bayt [the Haram in Makkah], and then balks at going, thereupon his death is on par with a Jew or a Christian. For Allah has said, "**Pilgrimage to the Bayt is a duty owed to Allah by all people who are able to undertake it.**"*¹⁴²

There is general agreement among all Muslim scholars that this *āyah* is inclusive of everyone except children: male and female, rich and poor, far and near. A person wanting to go to Hajj may be prevented from doing so because of debt; when he pays his debt he is free to go to Hajj. He may also be inhibited by providing for his family. If he can secure their livelihood and well-being while he is gone, he is permitted to go. This is based on another hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ), "A person accumulates more than enough vileness by eschewing [shunning his responsibility toward] his dependents."¹⁴³ This would also include care for parents. A Muslim is permitted to part with his parents to go to Hajj even if that means emotional difficulties; but he is not permitted to do so if it endangers the parents' lives or causes livelihood difficulties.

A Muslimah needs the consent of her husband to go to Hajj, all other conditions being met. A Muslimah should not feel compelled to go to Hajj if she is not accompanied by her husband or a blood-relative *mahram* (one with whom her marriage is proscribed). This is understood from the Prophet's (ﷺ) hadith, "A woman who is

committed to Allah and the Final Day should not embark on a journey of more than three days without a mahram or husband.”¹⁴⁴ However, even though this will always be a controversial issue, a woman may go to Hajj in the company of other women.

For a Muslim who may have passed away before performing the Hajj at least once, another person may be “deputized” to perform the Hajj on his behalf. Some ‘alims also say that a financially able but physically disabled Muslim may have another Muslim substitute for him in performing the Hajj. This is deduced from the Prophet’s (ﷺ) hadith when a woman from the tribe of Khath‘am came to him and said, “O Messenger of Allah! The Hajj duty catches up with my father when he is terribly old and cannot maintain an upright posture.” He said to her, “Then you perform the Hajj for him.” Later in the same hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) goes on to ask her, “Would you not pay off a debt that your father owes?” She answered, “Certainly.” Then he said, “But Allah’s debt is more worthy of being paid off.”¹⁴⁵ From this incident, some scholars extended the analogy to suggest that disabled Muslims can pay substitute Muslims to perform the Hajj for them, provided they are financially able to do so without neglecting other financial responsibilities.

Beyond this “individual” performance of the Hajj is the larger picture in which tens of millions of Muslims who want to go to Hajj are prevented from doing so by official policies that violate the spirit of the above āyāt and hadiths. The Hajj is restricted to two million each year when there are estimated to be at least 20 million Muslims who want to discharge this duty each year, out of an Ummah that numbers well over 1.5 billion. The Hajj is also cut down to three weeks, although the Qur’an makes it clear that Hajj is an activity of up to three months. This diminution of collective mass Hajj must be made very clear to the Muslim mind and equally prominent in the Muslim media. Only when the vast majority of ordinary Muslims realizes it and is determined to do something about it can this situation, which insults the spirit of the Hajj and the purposes of the *dīn*, be rectified.

Ahl al-Kitāb Know the Truth But Reject It Anyway

After this brief discussion of the Hajj, the Qur'an returns to the people of earlier scriptures, the Jews and the Christians. The Qur'an commands the Prophet (ﷺ) to warn them that Allah (ﷻ) is aware of what they do as they continue to try to dissuade people from Allah's (ﷻ) way, despite their awareness of its truth.

Say, “O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you refuse to acknowledge the truth of Allah’s [power] manifestations, when Allah is witness to all that you do?” Say, “O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you [endeavor to] bar those who have come to believe [in this divine Writ] from the path of Allah by trying to make it appear crooked, when you yourselves bear witness [to its being straight]? For, Allah is not unconscious of what you do.” (3:98–99).

Although such rebukes toward the “People of the Book” are repeated many times throughout the Qur'an, in other places there are favorable and well-disposed words about them. Some people may regard this as the Qur'an contradicting itself; but in fact, the People of the Book are like any other people, consisting of some good and some bad, some righteous and some not, as well as those “wanting to believe” and those who are in denial of God. Different groups within the People of the Book are addressed in different ways in different places in the Qur'an.

In all cases, however, the Qur'an speaks plainly and directly about such issues, unlike many Muslims nowadays. The words of the Qur'an make it very clear that Muslims should not allow themselves to be deceived by “Jewish” and “Christian” claims and propaganda. When their essence is *kufir*, no amount of churchgoing or synagogue attendance on the Sabbath is going to fool an avid and ardent disciple of these straightforward words. These supposed People of the Book effectively deny Allah (ﷻ) and His signs by denying His Messenger (ﷺ). They deny His presence in human affairs and they deny His revealed words. If they were really true to

the scriptures they claim to follow, they would have no difficulty in recognizing and accepting this Qur’an, as all the prophets (ﷺ) who were sent by Allah (ﷻ) shared the same essential message of *tawhīd*. There is no confusion in Allah’s (ﷻ) scriptures; some “details” or specific points may have varied in different places at different times, but not the core message and ethical framework: all people are required to yield and conform to Allah (ﷻ) in faith and in action, in their moral selves and in their collective societies. All this can be summed up simply: acquiescing to Allah (ﷻ) and His will on earth. The rebellious and self-willed People of the Book have gone to great lengths to obscure this fact. Look around; observe what is being said and taught. From amongst them, who is plainly and straightforwardly dealing with this issue? The immediate answer is no one. This is why Allah (ﷻ) asks these scripturalists, **“Why do you decline to acknowledge the truth of Allah’s [power] manifestations, when Allah is witness to all that you do?”** There are Muslim thinkers and leaders who give the Jews and Christians a clean bill of health; indeed, these types of Muslims sometimes seem to elevate the People of the Book to a status above Muslims themselves. How do such Muslims answer to these point-blank words of Allah (ﷻ)?

Another point to ponder in this *āyah* is, according to the plain words of Allah (ﷻ), that these People of the Book do not deny the truth because they are ignorant of it; they deny the truth despite their familiarity with it, **“...when you [People of the Book] yourselves bear witness [to its being straight and right]?”** In other words, these arrogant scripturalists knew very well the truth they were denying. They knew that by distracting people from this Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ), they were deflecting them from the final message of Allah (ﷻ); and it does not matter to them that in their rush to malign the Qur’an and the Prophet (ﷺ), they also misrepresented the truth to their own people. For Christian and Jewish leaders to try so hard in expurgating the “Islamic potential of populism” from public discourse, it obviously means that ordinary Christians and uninitiated Jews are expendable.

Say, “O followers of earlier scripture! Why do you [try to] bar those who have come to commit themselves [to Allah] from the path of Allah by attempting to make it appear crooked, when you yourselves bear witness [to its being straight]? (3:99).

One does not need to be a rocket scientist to understand the intents of this *āyah*. Abundantly evident nowadays is how the elitists who claim to be Jewish or Christian harbor a deep animosity against Islam. They throw every possible attack at it. The times we are living in today have brought out the reality of those who use Judaism and Christianity to hide their real agendas. A few illustrations are enough to demonstrate this clear reality.

In 2002, the first ever “Godless Americans March” took place in Washington, DC. About 2,000 nonbelievers converged on the National Mall to demand equal rights under the American constitution and separation between politics and the pulpit. The demonstrators — self-proclaimed atheists, agnostics, “free-thinkers,” and secular humanists from all over the US — waved placards that read “One Nation Under the Constitution” (as opposed to “One Nation Under God” in the American Pledge of Allegiance), “Religion Kills,” and “God is a Fairy Tale.” Fewer than a dozen counter-demonstrators standing nearby taunted them by shouting scripture through a bullhorn. These nonbelievers marched on the National Mall between Capitol Hill and the Washington Monument, where more than 20 speakers addressed the audience from a stage for almost four hours on a sunny but chilly day.¹⁴⁶

“This is a class in Activism 101... We Godless Americans are everywhere. Nonbelievers comprise 14 percent of the population... We are your husbands and friends... We work for corporations, and we, too, served in the recovery after 9/11,” said Ellen Johnson, president of American Atheists, the group that organized the march.¹⁴⁷

This event barely made it onto the pages of a few newspapers. There was no establishmentarian hue and cry about atheists and pagans seeking self-determination. Ask anyone in the world about Ellen Johnson, the president of American Atheists, and few if any

would ever have heard of her. In the meantime, ask anyone in the world about Imam Khomeini or Osama bin Laden, and they will have heard about them, in one way or another. Why? Because Islamic self-determination is the cardinal sin that is not forgivable or forgettable.¹⁴⁸

Also in 2002, a French court ruled on whether a French author, Michel Houellebecq, should be penalized for calling Islam “the dumbest religion.” This is not an isolated statement expressed by a voice in the wilderness. “The dumbest religion, after all, is Islam,” Mr. Houellebecq said in an interview. “When you read the Koran, you’re shattered. The Bible at least is beautifully written because the Jews have a heck of a literary talent.” Mr. Houellebecq also told the interviewer that he felt Islam was “a dangerous religion right from the start.” Other writers came to Houellebecq’s defense, including Salman Rushdie.¹⁴⁹

And then of course, there are the now infamous Danish cartoons, ridiculing and humiliating the Prophet (ﷺ), that appeared in the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper in late 2005. These cartoons, defended by free-speech advocates mostly located in the capitals of European and American *kufir*, were reprinted in the newspapers of 50 other countries. In the explanatory text below the cartoons, the culture editor of the newspaper, Flemming Rose, commented,

The modern, secular society is rejected by some Muslims. They demand a special position, insisting on special consideration of their own religious feelings. It is incompatible with contemporary democracy and freedom of speech, where you must be ready to put up with insults, mockery and ridicule. It is certainly not always attractive and nice to look at, and it does not mean that religious feelings should be made fun of at any price, but that is of minor importance in the present context. [...] we are on our way to a slippery slope where no-one can tell how the self-censorship will end. That is why *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* has invited members of the Danish editorial cartoonists union to draw Muhammad as they see him.¹⁵⁰

The same newspaper had earlier declined to run the same kind of cartoons about Jesus (ﷺ). This controversy led to protests around the Muslim world and the Danish embassies in Syria, Iran, and Lebanon were set ablaze. Western governments, whose positions were elucidated in their newspapers, rallied to the support of Danish free-press policies, dubbing the controversy as the “Cartoon Intifada.” In addition to a worldwide boycott by Muslims of Danish products, the Islamic government in Iran, in an effort to publicize the hypocritical application of principle by Western institutions, responded by holding an international conference on the Holocaust. While the same Western governments trashed the free assembly of scholars who questioned the Zionist, American, and European narrative of the Holocaust, they continued to defend the “right” to print the cartoons under free-speech constitutional protections.

The question here, as it was in the time of Muhammad (ﷺ) in Arabia, is: why are these supposed “People of Scripture” so perturbed by devotion to the Qur’an? All these literary and political leaders of *kufr* achieve is to demonstrate the truth of Allah’s (ﷻ) words when He speaks about them, **“Why do you [seek to] bar those who have come to affirm [this divine Writ] from the path of Allah by trying to make it [Islam] appear crooked, when you yourselves attest to its being straight?”**

Do Muslims need further verification of this *āyah* when they see a chorus of Western officials and politicians stating directly and indirectly that the Muslim world is engaged in a war of civilization with the West. With all of this evidence before them, Muslims still behave as though none of this is happening, or ever happened. Allah (ﷻ) says it in words and His enemies express it in wars, yet many of us are still shy of these realities.

Alliances with Political Jews and Christians Lead to *Kufr*

Once these power-intoxicated “Jews” and “Christians” are brought into the light of the Qur’an and dressed down for what they really are, the *āyāt* turn to the Muslims. They provide the promising Muslims with the information and counsel they need at a time

when it seems that everyone is against them. There are social laws at work and these social laws are encapsulated in these *āyāt*,

O you who are securely committed [to Allah]! If you pay heed to some of those who received earlier scripture, they might cause you to become post covenant *kāfirs*. And how could you become *kāfirs* when it is to you that Allah’s *āyāt* are being conveyed, and it is in your midst that His apostle lives? But he who holds fast to Allah has already been guided to a straight way.

O you who have become firmly committed [to Allah]! Be on guard of Allah [and His retribution] as is due to Him, and do not allow death to catch up with you before you have surrendered yourselves to Him. And hold fast, all together, to the bond with Allah, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren; and [how, when] you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it.

In this way Allah makes clear His *āyāt* to you, so that you might find guidance (3:100–103).

Like many of the *āyāt* in the Qur’an that deal with human nature and provide Muslims with social laws, the context in which these *āyāt* were revealed needs to be understood. The following context describes the human behavioral mode that has become the subject of this lesson.

One day a Yahūdī by the name of Shās ibn Qays, who was known as a vocal enemy of the Muslims, came upon a company of Muslims who were having a discussion among themselves. These Muslims were of the Aws and the Khazraj, the two dominant power factions who came to be known as the Anṣār in Madinah, when the Prophet (ﷺ) reached the city. As he had seen their pre-Islamic feuding and fighting, this Yahūdī was now upset to see how friend-

ly these people had become after committing themselves to Allah (ﷻ). Shās then said, as a matter of commenting on this family atmosphere between these enemies of yesteryear, “The status people of the descendants of Qaylah [the Aws and Khazraj] have now found common cause in this land. I trust we [Yahūd] will no longer be established in this setting.”¹⁵¹

So Shās instructed a young Yahūdī to go to this gathering of Muslims, and remind them of the Day of Bu‘āth and the details of that day. The Day of Bu‘āth was well known as the day on which the Aws and Khazraj went to war against each other, and resulted in the Aws scoring a victory over the Khazraj.

The Yahūdī protege did as he was told, and the Muslims began to recall the divisive issues related to that bloody battle. Some boasted of their chivalry and military prowess, tempers rose, and two men, Aws ibn Qayzī from the Aws tribe and Jabbār ibn Ṣakhr from the Khazraj tribe, began to exchange accusations and insults, until one of them said to the other, “If you wish I will revisit and instigate it [the war] in its prime.” This served as a call to arms for the two clans, and a place was appointed for the now renewed battle: al-Zāhiraḥ, a place in Madinah known for its volcanic rocks. At this point individuals from the two tribes actually began making their way to that “battlefield” with the zeal of *jāhiliyah*.

Fortunately some cooler heads went to Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) and informed him of these developments. The Prophet (ﷺ) and some of the Muhājirūn went out to the clans and said,

*O Muslim folks! Allah! Allah! Are you inciting the jingoism of jāhiliyah while I am still in your presence? [Remember] you have been honored by Islam; this should have terminated the affairs of jāhiliyah. You have been reconciled. Why do you revert to your previous state of kufr?*¹⁵²

At that moment the feuding clansmen realized they had been taken in by the influence of Satan. They also recognized this to be an enemy’s plot. They threw down their arms and wept. Some of them went up to others and embraced them. Then they left in the

company of Rasūl-Allah (ﷺ) reaffirming their obedience and discipline. It was after this incident that Allah (ﷻ) capped this social lesson with the *āyah*, “O you who are steadfastly committed! If you listen to a segment of those who received prior revelation they may cause you to regress into *kufr* after you committed yourselves to Allah...”

There is a social law here that modern-day Muslims have a habit of violating over and over again. Allah (ﷻ) explains that Muslims are not to pay any attention to leaders of other scriptural communities who try to sow dissension among them. Muslims are expected to have a collective personality of their own. This social personality has to be independent and autonomous.

It is to be noted that in this case the instigator was a Yahūdī. This does not mean the Yahūd have a monopoly on this type of intrigue and conniving. Muslims should be on the alert to anyone who approaches them with a purpose of inciting discord among them. Remember Allah’s (ﷻ) words in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*,

Out of their selfish [nationalistic] envy, many among the followers of earlier scripture would like to bring you back to *kufr* [denying Allah’s power presence] after you have committed yourselves [to Allah’s power]... (2:109).

The decision-makers and the common people in the Muslim world need to realize that it is their responsibility alone to work Allah’s (ﷻ) will on earth, and they should not expect others to support them in it. Nothing can substitute for the grassroots confidence in Allah (ﷻ) that turns only to Allah (ﷻ) to do only the Will of Allah (ﷻ) on earth — not the support of “People of the Book,” nor those who claim to share an “Abrahamic” heritage, nor even the propagandists who suggest that Western capitalism is a natural ally against ungodly communism. This lesson is easier read than learned, as shown by the quick-solution Muslims who want to shoot into prominence by climbing the political ladder with the help of their People of the Book brethren. One need

only look at the real world to see how perfunctory Muslims perform in this regard.

The US and its “scriptural” allies from Tel Aviv to London invaded Afghanistan on the grounds that it gave shelter to al-Qaeda. The same people instructed the “pious” Saudi and the “savvy” Pakistani officials to stop funding their *madrasāhs*. How much *tafsīr* does one need before he can understand why the elites of Ahl al-Kitāb are dictating to Saudi and Pakistani “sovereigns” about how they can educate their own children and teach them Islam? And some in these countries regard the US as a natural ally, representing a “People of the Book.” This same US has pressured almost every country in the world to change their banking procedures and report to the US government movements of money domestically in each country. The “benign,” *kitābī* USA also insists on the “right” to use US special forces to hunt and kill Muslims in Indonesia, the Philippines, Sudan, Georgia, Yemen, Somalia, and who knows where else.

In the servant-master relationship between Muslim subordinates and non-Muslim political masters, the Pharaoh on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC and his Bushmen compelled “Islamic” Pakistan to change its military defense strategies vis-à-vis India. These same *kitābī* leaders forced the UN to “authorize” war against Iraq. If these “sympathetic *kitābīs*” go about their deadly business of war in their historical fashion they will allocate Muslim wealth and Iraq’s oil supply to buy various nations’ support in this venture. This is what happens when we, the Muslims, do not take the words of Allah (ﷻ) into the threatening and menacing world around us, read it there, and heed its lessons.¹⁵³

The 9/11 attacks revealed a Yahūdī hand at work. The deep secrets of the *Saudi-kitābī* relationship may begin to unravel. The intrigue and strategy are Yahūdī to the core. Arabia’s fanatical Wahhābī establishmentarians have allocated untold billions during the past half-century to turning the US in Muslim eyes into a bastion of Ahl al-Kitāb. In the process the line between the US and Israel has been blurred. The next trick may be to turn the Zionists also into Ahl al-Kitāb. Teachings, in mosques and Islamic schools

throughout the world, that are financed by the Saudi agents of America would further this line. In return, Saudi officials would receive assurances from US administrations pertaining to their survival as “custodians of the two Ḥarams” and as the absolute rulers of Arabia. What the House of Saud still has difficulty comprehending is that it ignores Allah’s (ﷻ) words here at its own peril. It appears that it is now in a reactive mode toward its American slave-master.

Meanwhile, Washington fits the description of a maximalist hegemon that never deviated from its slave-owing character, only today the slaves are not indigenous. Every word in this accurate Qur’an tells the truth about those social orders that diverted away from Allah’s (ﷻ) course and denied the truth about Allah’s (ﷻ) power existence on earth. It can only be a slave mentality that kowtows to the forces of *kufr* and *shirk*. And throughout all these years the occupiers of Makkah and Madinah have been bowing in a servile manner to the materialistic and militaristic gods in the White House, the Pentagon, and Langley, Virginia (headquarters of the CIA).

The manner in which the “custodians,” “protectors,” and “defenders” of the Ḥaramayn al-Sharifayn approach and interact with their “Ahl al-Kitāb” superiors, the way they give preferential treatment to Americans and Europeans over Arabs and Muslims who are equally qualified for the same jobs, the way in which the Saudi *pro-mushriks* permit to be stationed tens of thousands of American military forces in the land of Islam, all display in the first instance the sense of inferiority of these nomadic stewards and primitive wardens of Arabia. These types of Muslim are in no position to lead, much less set an example for others to follow. The Muslims who are recipients of these words from Allah (ﷻ) are expected to be vanguards and groundbreakers who have confidence and show leadership qualities. The Saudis are far from this standard. If people believe, as many Muslims do, that the Saudi Arabian government is an Islamic government, they implicitly cast doubt on the quality of Islamic governance itself. This unquestioning acceptance of the Saudis by Islamic movements around the world works directly into the hands of *kufr* and *shirk*. In fact, this attitude is a precursor to *kufr* itself, if *kufr* is understood as the

denial of the truth. So why do broad segments of the Islamic movement continue to deny the truth when it comes to the occupation of Makkah and Madinah by Saudi subordinates of *kufr* — a *kufr* that conveniently masquerades as Ahl al-Kitāb?

On the other side of this issue, those Ahl al-Kitāb who are so admired by the Saudi usurpers of Makkah and Madinah exhibit an unmistakable determination to ensure that Muslims never gain any semblance of liberation or a fair social contract with the people around them. This is reminiscent of the *mushriks* of Makkah, who showed a similar determination to prevent Muhammad (ﷺ) from succeeding in finding allies as he took his message to peoples in the region.

The Zionist-instigated and American-led war against Islamic self-determination in the 20th and 21st centuries is self-evident; until, that is, you meet the officials of Saudi Arabia. They still have not figured out what Allah (ﷻ) is saying in the Qur'an, even though the Qur'an is "recited" in Saudi Arabia, on television and in public, probably more than any other place on earth. But what effect can the Qur'an have when minds are slammed shut and heads are brain-dead? The Saudi religious and political spokesmen, even when it seems like war must be coming their way, have not mustered enough courage to understand that Allah (ﷻ) in this last Book has referred to the *kāfirs* among Ahl al-Kitāb, who have shown their colors; yet these Saudi officials insist on being color-blind. This Zionist-incited and American-operated war is conveniently referred to as a "preemptive war" or a "preventive war." But any Muslim who reads the Qur'an with open eyes and alert mind must realize he is witnessing a new expression of imperialism analogous to the Crusades and the Inquisitions.

The war is an old one, with only cosmetic differences. Long years were spent in Muslim territories of the world by colonialists, imperialists, orientalist, evangelists, and missionaries who tried to convince the Muslims that they can live without autonomy and self-respect. This was done by secularizing the Muslim world. But now secularism finds itself in retreat. And the institutions, ideas, and incentives that sustained the secular Muslim elites are no

longer enough to withstand the tide of Muslim masses who want liberation and the freedom to be real Muslims. So the *kāfirs* from among the supposed Ahl al-Kitāb are going for the kill; they want to focus their entire military power on a “final solution” to the growing tide of Islamic self-determination. Their last line of protection, represented by the Saudi sycophants, is showing signs of failure. There is now a real chance that Makkah may be liberated, followed immediately by Madinah, and subsequently by al-Quds. But the *kāfirs* will not easily let this happen; they are bound to have further tricks up their sleeve. One may be to forestall the rising tide of popular Islamic self-determination by sabotaging it from within, to give the impression of false starts. The Yahūdī-American scheme may be to forge Islamic credentials for opportunistic individuals who are “selected” from within the “Islamic movement.” Let us not be so shortsighted as to assume that the Islamic movement does not have its *munāfiqs*; even the Prophet (ﷺ) himself had *munāfiqs* around him. This war coming from the *kāfir* quarters of Ahl al-Kitāb has to be recognized as having subtle political fronts as well as brutal military ones. The question is whether Muslims in their struggle are going to rely on Allah (ﷻ), as they should, or they are going to rely on false forces and perfidious powers.

Take one example of those who have sold their souls to the devil. Prince Turki al-Faisal, Director of the Saudi General Intelligence Department (GID) from 1977–2001, wrote an article in the *Washington Post* — far away, he may have thought, from the eyes of Muslims. Demonstrating how true Allah’s (ﷻ) words are, how relevant they are today over 1,400 years after they were revealed, and how oblivious the ruling elites in Muslim domains are to them, Turki said,

In September 1973 I was appointed to Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Liaison Bureau, which was mandated to work with friendly intelligence agencies, including the CIA...

In the 1970s and 80s, the CIA and GID [General Intelligence Department] worked together to combat communist-inspired terrorist organizations around the

world. We shared information on Abu Nidal and the various Palestinian groups, as well as the Red Brigades in Italy, the Baader-Meinhof Gang in Germany, the Japanese Red Army, and many others that threatened US-Saudi interests. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the US and Saudi governments entered into a joint covert program with Pakistan to help the Afghan people resist the invaders...

I also experienced the high points in the relationship — for example, the disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel and Syria and Israel in 1975 and 1976; neither would have taken place without Saudi-US cooperation. Nor would the increase in Saudi oil production in the mid-80s (which led to lower oil prices and set the stage for a period of extended global prosperity), the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon in 1982 or the Saudi contribution to the fight against the contras in Nicaragua. And in the 90s, Saudi-American collaboration was instrumental in liberating Kuwait and laying the groundwork for the subsequent Madrid Conference, which brought Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians together to seek a permanent peace settlement for the first time.

Then came September 11... As director of general intelligence, I had for some time regarded Osama bin Laden as a key intelligence target. [Since 1994], I shared all the intelligence we had collected on Bin Laden and al-Qaeda with the CIA...

Saudi Arabia has worked with the United States for the past 70 years. Both countries have benefitted from this enduring partnership. Remember that we face the same threat: Bin Laden targeted Saudi Arabia before he targeted America...¹⁵⁴

This tumbling into the abyss of *kufir* was the worst thing a first-generation Muslim around the Prophet (ﷺ) thought could happen to a

fellow Muslim. Yet today there are high-profile Muslims crumbling into *kufr* before our very eyes, while our “Islamic” scholars maintain a deafening silence on this issue. What greater *munkar* could there be than former “Muslims” becoming sidekicks of *kufr*, as is barefacedly the case with the Saudi turncoats? They do this regardless of these Qur’anic *āyāt*, and in spite of the model offered by the Sirāh.

And how could you deny [Allah’s power presence] when it is to you that Allah’s *āyāt* are being relayed, and it is in your [geographical and historical] midst that His Apostle lives? (3:101).

These *āyāt* live on and the Prophet’s (ﷺ) guidance endures. But when the mind itself is assaulted, neither the Book nor the Prophet (ﷺ) can be reached. But we must not lose faith or heart; there is a way out, **“But he who is [power] protected by Allah has already been guided to a straight path.”** Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) was self-disciplined and strict when it came to what we call “ideological issues.” And when it came to details, he was tolerant and flexible. This scenario seems to be reversed nowadays. Muslims of our generation adopt ideological tenets of *kufr*, and that does not count against them as long as they can doctor up this offensive violation with intensive ritual.

At this critical juncture let us turn to the occupiers of Islam’s cradle, the Saudi subservients of *shirk*, and ask them how they managed to hide their loyalty to *kufr* for such a long time? They read Allah’s (ﷻ) words, and the Prophet’s (ﷺ); one wonders how they read the following hadith,

Do not ask Ahl al-Kitāb about things [doctrinaire]. They are not able to guide you when they themselves have deviated. [And if you do] you either confirm a falsity or refuse the truth. And, indeed, if Mūsá was up and alive among you he would have no choice but to follow me. [In other narratives: If Mūsá and ‘Īsá were alive their only choice would be to follow me].¹⁵⁵

This clearly means that Muslims are expected to steer clear of Ahl al-Kitāb on issues pertaining to theology, ideology, and philosophy. This could be extended to include the social or behavioral sciences. But when it comes to issues of physical sciences, then the human condition and the tolerance of Islam permit the exchange of this type of information. The applications of physical sciences, however, would have to be tied to the concepts and norms that are integral to the divine paradigm, and must be divorced from highly agenda-driven Western materialistic paradigms. Today, Muslims have this whole matter upside down. The Saudis represent this anomaly very well. They want to satisfy Ahl al-Kitāb by assuring them they are making progress on issues pertaining to women's rights, the country's legal system (Shari'ah), the Islamic educational curricula, etc. And in the process these Saudis ignore all that Allah (ﷻ) is saying.

The obsequious rulers of Makkah and Madinah, if they have it their way, will Americanize Arabia. And what is the situation in America? Churches have lost their nerve at a time when people seem to be flocking to them en masse, looking for solace, meaning, and leadership in the face of crisis. What do they find? More often than not, they will be subjected to a glut of feel-good praise choruses, guitars and drums, and pithy sermons on the appointed text for the day, not to mention such "Christian" symbols as "God Bless America" and prayers that amount to, "Lord, keep us steadfast while the US military bombs Afghanistan back into the stone age." What they will not find is the word of God. Lutherans, Catholics, Presbyterians, Episcopalians — clergy and laity — have capitulated to the economic deity that is America. Every aspect of their lives has been integrated into the worship of the dollar. Once this erosion occurs, "mere Christianity" — that deposit of faith, which is apparently guarded at the core of America — will be free to float away as well. If this American reality is a preview of Arabia's future, we too will see a token Islam submitting to the powerful dollar and riyal, while weak, confused Muslims debate irrelevant points in *madrasahs* and *hawzahs* of the Muslim world.

This Ahl al-Kitāb jungle as presented by the Saudi "divines" will wreak havoc on all Muslims if it has its way. Muslims who buy

into the Saudi version of reality may find Americans “more religious” and “socially conservative” than Europeans, but that is not saying much, considering how decadent Europe is. America is a country where the traditional family seems to have broken down irretrievably. The typical marriage ends in divorce, and illegitimacy is now common, across racial and socioeconomic lines. Visitors from the East are often shocked by the vulgarity and shamelessness of American “popular culture” that, even as entertainment, shapes the general tone of society. Perhaps one should not be surprised at the barbarism and weirdness of many American teenagers, when their role models are people like Howard Stern, Mike Tyson, Britney Spears, and the Terminator.

Of course Muslims are lagging behind technologically, but they cannot compensate for that by adopting Western norms and values. Muslims do not have an industrial base, but they cannot build one by listening to what evangelical missionaries are saying. Muslims are (financially and economically) poor, but they are not going to become self-sufficient and prosperous by depositing the bulk of their wealth in *ribā-based* financial institutions that are pivotal to the Western military-industrial complex as it arms almost all the enemies of Islam around the globe.

Inevitably, there are doubting Thomases who say, “But what type of Islamic program are you talking about? Show us the blueprint.” And the answer to this question is that, in general terms, this Qur’an is the design and pattern of what is on the minds of hundreds of millions of Muslims, even though they have so far fallen short of putting it into action. And the Prophet’s (ﷺ) model and his success are proof positive that this is a workable and doable political platform and practical policy. As for specific details, these will have to be worked out by Muslims who are collectively sick of the universal injustice in the world, and who are confident that rectifying solutions can only be developed by referring the problems to Allah’s (ﷻ) Book and His Messenger (ﷺ). Give us the chance to put Muslim minds together, to constitute an Islamic public opinion, and to decide for ourselves who and what we want to be — and then, and only then, will the answers to these type of questions emerge.

Once this is done, not only will Muslims prosper and progress, but so will all other peoples yearning for justice and peace.

Looking at the situation from another angle, what has Western secular civilization gained by all the technological advances that have scored resounding scientific victories in creating an industrial infrastructure, and by moving medical science ahead in certain respects? Many of these achievements border on the miraculous, and there is plenty of promising new research. But has this modernism improved either the quality of human life or the standard of living for the vast majority of people on earth? Has Western secular civilization reached a plateau of peace with itself, with the societies around it, and with its Maker? Of course not. Much of what lies below the carefully crafted public image of this civilization amounts to depression, fear, neurosis, and insecurity. Can anyone look at the metropolitan areas in Europe and America and observe peace and harmony in the lives of individuals, or even peace in the neighborhoods of such mega-cities? Crime and behavioral perversion have probably reached an all-time high. The problem seems even more complicated because the crime culture has transcended the individual and simple, becoming corporate and complex. In the West a generation is emerging that is out of touch with the world and its surroundings. It is difficult to get to know about nature if you live in a 30-story apartment building in the heart of a sprawling city. Man can no longer continue to allow modern technology to race past him. He has to recognize its successes, but also accept its dangers and limitations, so that it does not race ahead so far as to destroy life on Earth altogether.

The secularized and contemporary Western generation thinks it is one of the most educated and informed, and still it does not understand the concept of Allah's (ﷻ) power presence on Earth; which is one way it expresses its rebellion against God. And the decision-makers coming out of this generation of denial do not want to make it public knowledge that nuclear waste generated in Britain may end up in Italy, that belching smokestacks in Buffalo can ruin lakes outside Montreal, and that ocean-dumping by Japan might lead to less food for Chile. Western civilization may radiate

with brilliance in mathematics or easy access to information, with great prospects on Wall Street or in Silicon Valley,¹⁵⁶ but unless the brains in the leading seats of power and technology understand the interrelationship between the social and physical laws of the world, man could be living on a planet that might well be doomed. We can choose our fate, but only if we fully understand the consequences of our actions. The tragic day-to-day and year-to-year unfolding of policies and strategies by corporate and governmental America and its secular peers — including those who are expediently cloaked with Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions — are leading the human race to a clash with Allah (ﷻ).

In effect, humanity, despite all the good will that dwells within its human nature, has been hijacked by big bosses, criminal corporations, concentrated capital, and runaway governments. This “elite” is the barrier between humanity and its Creator. And still this elite continues down a course of apocalyptic disasters, dragging along with it the uninitiated and fledgling peoples of the world. We, the committed Muslims, know who they are, and they, the God-denying power-mongers, know who we are; and now the polarization has reached a breaking point. We are confident that Allah’s (ﷻ) love and mercy will undo all this war hype that comes out of their dragon-mouths. The day of reckoning is quickly approaching when the Muslims will rejoice with the *fath* (liberation) of Makkah, as they rejoiced when Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) scored the first *fath* of that power center of the Muslim Ummah.

The first step in that direction is for Muslims to break from the Saudi/Ahl al-Kitāb nonsense. Of course there are some genuine Ahl al-Kitāb in the world, but that should not blind us to the reality that most of those who claim that title are avowed enemies of Allah (ﷻ). Let us open our eyes and see the ties that bind nominal Christians, Jews, and Muslims to each other as they take on the contemporary committed Muslims and the hope they represent.

We invite the Muslims who are on the Saudi bandwagon, which virtually idolizes Ahl al-Kitāb, to activate their minds and read the phrase *Ahl al-Kitāb* in context. The following *āyāt* will do to begin with, and there are many others,

Neither those from among Ahl al-Kitāb who deny Allah, nor those who are *mushriks* would like to see any good ever bestowed upon you [the Muslims] from on high by your Sustainer... (2:105).

O Ahl al-Kitāb! Why do you argue [with us] about Abraham, seeing that the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till [long] after him? (3:65).

Some of Ahl al-Kitāb would love to lead you astray, yet none do they lead astray but themselves, and perceive it not (3:69).

O Ahl al-Kitāb! Why do you deny the truth [of Allah's power presence in man's affairs] to which you yourselves bear witness? O Ahl al-Kitāb! Why do you cloak the truth with falsehood and conceal the truth of which you are [so well] aware?

And some of Ahl al-Kitāb say [to one another], "Declare your belief in what has been revealed to those who believe [in Muhammad] at the beginning of the day, and deny it later, so that they [the committed Muslims] might go back [and abdicate their commitment]" (3:70–72).

Say, "O Ahl al-Kitāb! Why do you refuse to acknowledge the truth of Allah's [power] illustrations, when Allah is witness to all that you do?" Say, "O Ahl al-Kitāb! Why do you try [your best] to deter those who have come to affirm [this divine Writ] from the path of Allah by trying to make it appear crooked, although you yourselves bear witness [to its being straight]?" (3:98–99).

Now if Ahl al-Kitāb had committed themselves [to Allah], it would have been for their own good (3:110).

Ahl al-Kitāb demand of you [O Prophet] that you cause a Book to be sent down to them from heaven. And an even greater thing than this did they demand of Moses... (4:153).

O Ahl al-Kitāb! Do not overstep the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs... (4:171).

O Ahl al-Kitāb! Now, after a long time during which no apostles have appeared, there has come to you Our Apostle to make [the truth] clear to you, lest you say, “No bearer of glad tidings has come to us, nor any warner” (5:19).

Say, “O Ahl al-Kitāb! Do you find fault with us for no other reason than that we are committed to Allah [alone], and in that which He has bestowed from on high upon us as well as that which He has bestowed aforetime — or [is it only] because most of you are iniquitous?” (5:59).

Say, “O Ahl al-Kitāb! You have no valid grounds for your beliefs unless you [truly] observe the Torah and the Gospel, and all that has been bestowed from on high upon you by your Sustainer!” (5:68).

Say, “O Ahl al-Kitāb! Do not overdo the bounds [of truth] in your religious beliefs; and do not follow the errant views of people who have gone astray aforetime, and have led many [others] astray, and are still straying from the right path” (5:77).

But, in today's world, where are the Muslims of conscience who can say these facts as stated in the Qur'an to Ahl al-Kitāb?

Allah (ﷻ) Unites while Man, Who Claims Scripture, Divides

After clearing up the issue of Ahl al-Kitāb, the Qur'an turns to the active Muslims, as they have a tendency to fold others in with Ahl al-Kitāb when the matter is one related to power. Notice that Muslims are swayed away from Allah (ﷻ) when they perceive power to be a "quality" of these Ahl al-Kitāb. So, when it is a matter of power, how timely it is for Allah (ﷻ) to remind these forgetful Muslims of where the true and ultimate power lies,

O you who have become firmly committed [to Allah]! Be on guard [against Allah's retribution] as is due to Him, and do not pass on before you have surrendered yourselves to Him. And hold fast, all together, to the bond with Allah, and do not separate from one another. And remember the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren; and [how, when] you were on the verge of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it. In this way Allah makes clear His *āyāt* to you, so that you might find guidance (3:102–103).

The network of ruling elites in what used to be a united and consolidated Muslim Ummah is guilty of ignoring this *āyah*. No ruler or governor is concerned with Allah's (ﷻ) power and therefore wary of Him. This *taqwá* that Allah (ﷻ) speaks about is a quality that Muslims acquire through awareness of the overwhelming power of Allah (ﷻ). But when Allah (ﷻ) is not a consideration in the meetings of Muslim politicians, and when Allah (ﷻ) is considered irrelevant in the closed sessions of Muslim strategists, and when Allah (ﷻ) is not viewed as a power to be reckoned with by the elites in Muslim societies, there can be no *taqwá*, even as it is reduced to passive piety and devotion. *Taqwá* is rendered to Allah (ﷻ) when the Muslim public mind is constantly aware of His authority, influence, and ultimate control. Muslims nowadays cheat themselves by making believe they are *muttaqīs*, when in

practice they are dismissive of Allah’s (ﷻ) sovereignty, supremacy, and reach.

This attitude is easily discernable from the way Muslims behave when they have to rely on themselves to do what has to be done, as opposed to running to the West to do things for them or even to defend them, as is routinely seen around the axis of Makkah, Madinah, and al-Quds. The policies of the tin-pot dictators who superficially qualify as Muslims indicate that they have not surrendered their lives, their destinies, and their whole selves to Allah (ﷻ). Had they done such a thing they would “**combine all together to a bond with Allah**” and be “**not divided from one another.**” But they are exactly the opposite of what Allah (ﷻ) is telling them to be. If Allah (ﷻ) is saying be black, they want to be white; if Allah (ﷻ) is saying be day, they want to be night; and if Allah (ﷻ) is saying be united, they want to be divided. Allah (ﷻ) is telling them to adhere to Him but they are sticking with the *kāfirs* and *mushriks*. Allah (ﷻ) is appealing to their memories and intellects by reminding them how divided they used to be before Islam, with acrimony, feuds, battles, and bloodshed, before they found Allah (ﷻ), and with Him unity and strength. But instead of being aware of the power of Allah (ﷻ), as demonstrated by their own histories, they fear the power of Allah’s (ﷻ) enemies, who keep them in their current pathetic conditions.

The above *āyāt* show that Muslims who bind with Allah (ﷻ) have an independent and autonomous character of dignity and strength. If there is anything that distinguishes Muslims from others at this level, it is their undiluted and consistent ideological autonomy. Yet look around today: Muslims do not show any solid and substantial signs of ideological unity. Whichever philosophy or ideology comes around, Muslims want to claim that it originated in Islam. When fascism was popular in Europe less than 100 years ago, there were Muslims who proclaimed that fascism is consistent with Islam because of its “leadership” tone. When socialism became the vogue some generations later, there were more than a few Muslims who hopped on the bandwagon, saying that socialism is an integral part of Islam. Some even referred to Muhammad (ﷺ) as the first

socialist in the world! And of course there are many scholars of fortune who redefine Islam to fit with capitalism, to the satisfaction of their secular paymasters.

We are today, let's face it, living at a time when there are powerful forces that harbor malice and hatred toward the Islamic social contract with Allah (ﷻ) — a social contract that is founded on *taqwá*. Their objectives vary from containing the Muslim potential to confronting Muslim power. These types will not go away. When Muslims are strong they are around; and when Muslims are weak they are around. They were there 14 centuries ago and they are here now. The difference is that 14 centuries ago the ascendancy of Muhammad (ﷺ) cut them down to size; but today the inferiority of Muslims has given these opposing forces the upper hand.

This is what happens when Muslims decide to ignore the plain words of Allah (ﷻ) and to distance themselves from His Prophet (ﷺ). Obviously human nature is susceptible to rebellious tendencies, **“And yet, I [Yūsuf] am not trying to absolve myself, for verily, man’s inner self does incite [him] to evil, and saved are only they upon whom my Sustainer bestows His grace (12:53).** Sometimes Muslims find it difficult to be associated with other Muslims. But if they listen to Allah (ﷻ) closely, they find Him saying,

And on whatever you may differ, [O committed Muslims], the judgment therein rests with Allah (42:10).

And if you are at variance over any matter, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you are [truly] committed to Allah and the Last Day. This is the best [for you], and the best end-result (4:59).

The bond with Allah (ﷻ) that is spoken of in *āyah* 3:103 refers to the words of Allah (ﷻ), this beloved Book. All thinking human beings should pause for a moment and think what this world would be without the light that radiates from the words of this wonderous Writ. Had we not the mooring of this Book we would not be able to sift through the multitudes of currents within

human nature and the countless trends in human society to distinguish what is right from what is wrong, what is true from what is false, what is relative from what is absolute, and what is godly from what is not. Philosophers may argue endlessly about a “divine spark” within human nature, but the mental clarity and the spiritual elevation that come from understanding this Book from Allah (ﷻ) are beyond a shadow of a doubt. Another way of putting it is in the Prophet’s (ﷺ) words,

The Qur’an is Allah’s firm bond; it is His manifest light. The Qur’an’s wonders are inexhaustible; its marvels are interminable. It is not overworked by repetition. Whoever utters it speaks truth, whoever rules by it does justice, whoever works by it does right, and whoever binds to it is guided to a straight course.¹⁵⁷

This bonding to Allah (ﷻ) by adherence to His Book should be the Muslims’ first priority in today’s conflict-ridden world, especially when it comes to Muslims who keep on dividing themselves without end. Today’s disciples of the Qur’an should know that it was this Qur’an that made it possible for mutually hostile Arabians to become a united *ummaḥ*. The Yahūd were a factor in instigating hostilities among these pre-Islamic Arabians, but when these Arabians shed their tribal priorities, cast out their clannish precedences, and parted with their partisan peculiarities, they became a unified *ummaḥ* such as can only be the product of this contract with Allah (ﷻ). This bond rendered everyone a brother in the fold of the Qur’an and Islam. Today’s Muslims have to learn this lesson that was learned and then forgotten by pre- and post-Islamic Arabians. The history of Islam, dating back to the dawn of humanity, is so rich that it dwarfs every racial, national, or ethnic history of any group of people on earth. The brotherhood of Muslims is so “tight” that it dwarfs the blood relationships of kin groups and family ties,

And remember the blessings with which Allah has favored you: how, when you were enemies, He

brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brothers... (3:103).

These binding words should be considered by those who read the Qur'an today. Like the Arabians of the era of *jāhiliyah*, Muslims today have reverted to enmity among themselves. Across frontiers, they are enemies whose animosity takes on the bloody expression of war and Muslims are seen killing each other, as happens from time to time between those who are in Turkey and Iraq; or between those who are in Egypt and Yemen; or between those who are in Libya and Chad; and so on. And even within ethnicities, internal hostilities have broken out, dividing wax-figure Muslims. Samples of this internal blood feud are Jordanians against Palestinians, Lebanese against Palestinians, Syrians against Palestinians, Iraqis against Kuwaitis, Pakistanis against Afghans, and so on.

There is only one force that can bring these divided people together, and that is this Book and its Author. Note that Allah (ﷻ) does not say He brought these societies together; He says He brought their hearts together. Consolidation and unity are achieved at the level of human emotions and internal thoughts, regardless of differences and diversity at other individual and collective levels.

Regarding the role played by the Yahūd in tearing apart the social order in Arabia, the Qur'an exposes the larger character of these trouble-making and division-sowing Yahūd. It is this Yahūdī component of Ahl al-Kitāb that solicited most of the warnings regarding Ahl al-Kitāb in the previous *āyāt*. The rank and file of committed Muslims in Madinah were under huge pressure, generated by those Yahūdī masters of "divide and rule."

With the information and warnings available in Allah's (ﷻ) Book, there is really no need to know the exact names of the Yahūdīs today who are on every side of these raging conflicts in which Muslims end up killing Muslims, in which nationalists are ready to take on Muslims, in which sectarians have it in for their rivals, and in which gender and class issues are used to add spice to this contentious and controversial brew. Equipped with the wisdom and insight of the Qur'an, Muslims cannot afford to sit back and

feel sorry for themselves. No Muslim in the company of Allah (ﷻ) will surrender to such discord and division and let the Yahūd get away with their mischief and malice.

Out of you shall arise an *ummaḥ* that calls people to prosperity; it enforces the common good and it disestablishes the common malice, and it is they, they who shall be successful (3:104).

Before going into the meanings of this *āyah*, it should be pointed out that there are erosive factors gnawing at the union of interests, purposes, or sympathies among the active, committed Muslims. This may be viewed as a pincer wedge that tries to force these populist Muslims to fall apart or abandon their coherence and unity. There are intra-societal variables at work on the level of human nature and at the level of the more organized social contract with Allah (ﷻ) — *īmān*. So Allah (ﷻ) tells the Muslims that He has privileged them with His *ni'maḥ* (favor and prerogative). Our social reality was originally one of division and disunity; our psychology was one of enmity and hostility. Our preference for settling disputes was fighting and killing. Our communal life was characterized by the strongest devouring the weakest. But all of this was turned upside down. With Allah's (ﷻ) *ni'maḥ* we became brothers and friends. We took to heart Allah's (ﷻ) words, **“But committed Muslims are brothers [to each other]...” (49:10)**. We were on the precipice of a pit of fire and Allah (ﷻ) came to the rescue when we responded and yielded to Him. And the advantages of that Islamic mutual support for each other had so many benefits that go beyond our recollection and tabulation, **“And if you count the *ni'maḥs* of Allah you will not be able to compute them” (14:34)**.

The history of pre-Islamic peoples is like the history of post-Islamic peoples: materialism, “dog-eat-dog” societies, frequent wars, the “survival of the fittest,” the “law of the jungle,” and the disintegration of human relations within society, community, family, and self. This is pretty much what exists in the world today. The mutual inter-Arabian hostility of our time has made it possible for an

alien and offensive ideology such as Zionism to usurp the Holy Land and establish therein a nationalist and racist state. The same vindictive inter-Arabian animosity made it possible for the whole world to get involved in a war between “Iraq” and “Kuwait,” from which the ruling elites in that area have not recovered. This event, which laid the foundations for subsequent military conflicts, may cost the Ummah millions of lives, either wiped out or displaced. The solution to this behavior is for the Muslims to raise their attitudes and mind-set out of the modern *jāhiliyah* to which they have sunk, and return instead to the outlook and spirit of this Book. It is this Book only that is able to heal hearts and mend attitudes,

He it is who has supported you with His succor, and by giving you committed followers whose hearts he has brought together, [for], if you had expended all that is on earth you could not have brought their hearts together [by yourself], but Allah did bring them together. Verily, He is Almighty, Wise (8:63).

Only an Established Authority Can Enforce Social Justice

This opens the door to one of the most quoted, yet most misrepresented and misunderstood *āyāt* in the whole Qur’an,

Let there be among you a community [of people] who call to all that is good and right, who endorse and sanction the common good, and who forbid and condemn as unfit what is wrong and contemptible: it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state! (3:104).

This *āyah* is best known in English by ‘Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translation of it as, “Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong: they are the ones to attain felicity.”

This translation, however, is misleading and evasive, failing to deliver the power element central to this *āyah*; hence the attempt

to find a set of English words that better conveys its meanings and implications. This *āyah* is saying that there has to be a federation of committed Muslims who adopt prosperity and abundance for everyone as their public policy. This combination of cohesive committed Muslims wields the power to authorize the common good and to de-authorize the common evil. These tasks can only be done by an authority that exerts the power to do such things. The *āyah* does not specify that there should be a particular authority; but the responsibilities that are assigned to the association of unified Muslims are the responsibilities of an organized authority. People cannot and do not have access to abundance and wealth without the facilitation of an established authority. The general public also cannot, in and of itself, command and order the common good, the *ma‘rūf*, while disestablishing and demoting the common bad, the *munkar*. This has to be done by an authority that has the power, after acquiring the allegiance of Muslims, to do that.

Muslims are going to have to make the transition from a fragmented understanding of the Qur’an, and from the individual and personal interpretation of its meanings, to its consolidated meanings and their socio-political implications. This authority may in principle look like an Islamic government, or Islamic governance, or Islamic authority, or Islamic leadership, and so on. Some individuals may prefer to use the word *khilāfah*; others may choose instead the word *imāmah*, and still others may substitute the words *imārah* or sultanate. Our concern is not to get involved with the traditional and historical connotations of these expressions. This issue has to be accessed directly, here and now, from these living words of Allah (ﷻ) within this vivid Book of His. We need an authority that can call for the *khayr* (prosperity, goodness, right); that can legitimize the common good; and that can forbid, or at least make difficult, what causes harm.

Had it not been for this authority, which Allah’s Prophet (ﷺ) exercised in Madinah after obtaining the popular allegiance, no one would have been listening to his words, and if there were individuals listening to what he had to say, there would not have been the social willpower to implement the instructions and principles

of this “legal document.” There are requirements that demand the participation of our “higher selves.” There is work to be done; and some of this work will make onerous demands on those Muslims who rise to their historic responsibility. There are issues and directives that are military or economic in nature and other issues that are informational or educational. There are many other issues that pertain to a serious effort that organizes the human condition — and without an authority none of this can be done or accomplished. Even prophets (ﷺ) needed to be obeyed so that they could carry out their heavenly missions on earth, which were always centered on human societies and man’s range of activities in life. For this reason Allah (ﷻ) said, “...for We have never sent any apostle save that he should be obeyed by Allah’s leave” (4:64).

This Ummah of committed Muslims is needed for many other reasons. On one level it is needed to act as a regulator and modifier of the potential for evil in human behavior. When the power elite are prone to victimize the weak, the destitute, the orphans, the minorities, the women and children, the poor, the disenfranchised, and other segments of society, then what is needed to mitigate this tendency is the combination of sincere and committed Muslims, who blend popular allegiance with divine authority. This convergence of the popular will with the Will of Allah (ﷻ) is needed now more than ever. There are international cartels, satellite global-control systems, doctored information, social engineering, and resource plundering taking place all around the world; and all this is made possible by the Muslim failure to implement this *āyah* in the real world. We have to become an *ummaḥ* that combines a commitment to Allah’s (ﷻ) authority with a camaraderie alongside the rest of His creation. This means that brotherly Muslims are not permitted to live in this world without sharing this “brotherhood” with the rest of humanity. Allah (ﷻ) has reconciled the hearts of honorable Muslims, and out of this reconciliation of otherwise divergent hearts can come a congruence for humanity, prosperity for all, the standards of a common good that benefits everyone, and an obliteration of the common iniquities that should never see the light of day. And when that is done, a

universal state will exist where, “**...it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state.**”

When this aggregation of devout and committed Muslims are able to form a government or an authority that remains popular in the same sense that it remains heavenly, and when they exert their efforts along the lines expressed in this *āyah*, then the common good will be understood to be parallel to progress, virtue, truth, and justice. In this arrangement, truth and virtue surmount falsity and vice. Justice banishes injustice. Doing what is moral and right becomes easy and natural, while doing what is immoral and wrong becomes distant, difficult, even unimaginable.

This climate of ethics and atmosphere of virtue has been absent for many generations now. This is something that humanity is not immediately familiar with. Some people may think it is a utopian dream; in fact, it is not. It was once the world’s mood and temper, when these genuine and thoughtful Muslims were the embodiment of these *āyāt*. And if human nature could do it once, it can do it again, and again, and again.

Anyone with even minimal insight into his own nature should know that morality as the distinction between good and evil, or right and wrong, or good conduct and bad conduct, or motivations based on God-given ideas of right and wrong, needs an ambiance within which it can grow and flourish, whether that is at the level of a family, a *jamā‘ah*, or a society as a whole. The establishment of this ambiance is a human responsibility. Man has the autonomy in this world to create an atmosphere favorable to virtue or one favorable to vice. The world disorder of the 21st century thrives within a milieu of materialistic and militaristic conditions that are anathema to the aura of this divine text and its meanings. But this “authority structure” cannot be imposed from the outside. It cannot be established by a coup d’etat that forces even a “virtuous” dictatorship upon the hopes, aspirations, and desires of the people for peace and justice. Allah’s (ﷻ) words are not instructing Muslims to ram His guidance down the throats of those who are not prepared to accept it. That is why the genesis of this “authority structure” of the Ummah can be traced to “*wa-allafa bayna qulūbihim: and He rec-*

onciled and harmonized their hearts” (8:63). This is one of the bases of Islamic government. In one of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) hadiths that is worth at least a thousand ordinary words, he says,

*The relationship of committed Muslims, in their affinity with each other, their grace and care for each other, is like a person’s body; if one organ [in that body] falls sick all the other organs will respond supportingly and protectively.*¹⁵⁸

Another similar hadith states, “*The relationship of one committed Muslim to another committed Muslim is like a structure: a coordinated and reinforced compound.*”¹⁵⁹

When Allah (ﷻ) says that there should be an *ummaḥ* that seeks prosperity, this word *ummaḥ* could mean the whole Ummah with its millions of people, and it could also mean a proportion of them who are particularly and strongly united by the intents and purposes of the Qur’an; neither of these meanings necessarily excludes the other. But the Ummah in the millions and billions is the preferable meaning, because the smaller group can be a step to the greater. Thus the establishment of the *ma’rūf* and the disestablishment of the *munkar* remain forever the corresponding responsibility of all mature, able-bodied Muslims everywhere. One hadith has it this way,

*By He who has my life in His hand, you [the Muslims] will most certainly regulate ma’rūf and deconstruct the munkar, or else Allah will inflict you with a punishment of His. At that time if you call on Him He will not respond to you.*¹⁶⁰

Ignoring the emergence and growth of *munkar* has dire consequences. In the history of the Israelis, they were condemned precisely for failing to address corrective measures to the emergence of the *munkar*. They had no excuse for their heartless acts. So they were doomed in this world and the one to come. In this world they were to endure the life of castaways in exile. And in the future life their share is *Jahannam*,

Those of the Children of Israel who were bent on denying the truth [of Our power presence] have [already] been cursed by the articulation of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary; this, because they rebelled [against Allah] and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right. They would not prevent one another from doing the *munkar*: vile indeed was what they were wont to do! (5:78–79).

The words of the Qur’an then move immediately to the Day when reality presents itself,

And be not like those who have drawn apart from one another and have taken to conflicting views after all evidence of the truth has come to them; these are the ones for whom tremendous suffering is in store on the Day [of Judgment], [when] some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief].

And as for those with faces darkened, [they shall be asked], “Did you deny the truth [of Allah’s power] after making a commitment to Allah? Taste, then, this suffering for denying the truth!” But as for those with faces glowing, they shall be within Allah’s grace, therein to be forever (3:105–107).

This scenario leads into the crux of the issue, “These are Allah’s power manifestations: We convey them to you, setting forth the truth, since Allah wills no wrong to His creation” (3:108).

Many people want to avoid Allah’s (ﷻ) power presentations. And if they are acquainted with them, some of these people are in a historical habit of denying them. But this Book raises the conscience and sharpens its thoughts. Most people immediately affirm Allah (ﷻ) when they allow themselves to see His power illustrations (*āyāt*). Allah (ﷻ) does not want to do them injustice. There is a long list of His power expressions in their lives. And they are expected to confirm and rely upon His power when there are other

lesser powers trying to catch their attention and win their allegiance. It is in this set of facts and circumstances that Allah (ﷻ) wants justice. And justice is a function of Allah's (ﷻ) will taking its course through the human medium.

The most important thing to remember from this discourse may be summarized as follows: constructing the *ma'rūf* and deconstructing the *munkar* are responsibilities done when earnest and honest Muslims are in possession of power. Powerless Muslims disqualify from meeting the instructions of this *āyah*. Another supporting *āyah* puts it this way,

[When] We firmly establish them on earth [as they gain the required power], they remain upholders of the *ṣalāh* standard and the *zakāh*, and they demand the common good and they demand the abolition of the common harm, destruction, and misfortune; but with Allah rests the final outcome of all events. (22:41).

The current condition of today's Muslims is that of a massive political and social *munkar*. The Muslim public interest is in jeopardy, and if they continue this way they will incur even more of Allah's (ﷻ) affliction and damnation. The network of nation-states is one large reason for this unacceptable state of affairs. This established state of communal discord and social discordance rides on the conduct of *kufr* and *shirk*. Remember what Allah (ﷻ) says, "...those who have broken the unity of their *dīn* and have become sects, each group delighting in but what they themselves hold [by way of tenets]" (30:32). Allah's (ﷻ) Book offers another word of caution and advice,

Verily, as for those who have broken the unity of their *dīn* and have become sects, you have nothing to do with them. Behold, their case rests with Allah, and in time He will make them understand what they were doing (6:159).

And what could be better than rounding out this lesson with the seal of truth in His words, **“And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth; and all things go back to Allah [as their source]” (3:109).**

At the end of the day the issue of power is an issue of possession: possessing territory, possessing wealth, possessing land, possessing natural resources, possessing labor, possessing industries, and possessing frontiers. To all those power hungry chief executives and crowned heads: you own nothing. All that temporarily passes through your corridors of greed and power belongs to Allah (ﷻ), the First and the Final; and this *āyah* speaks volumes to your selfishness and to our temporary weakness.

An Unpolluted Commitment Determines Who Is the Best

What follows is Allah’s (ﷻ) characterization of the Muslim Ummah. This Ummah has a status conferred upon it by Allah (ﷻ). It is assumed that Muslims will realize who they really are if they tune into this description. At the same time, the Muslim Ummah is given notice of who Ahl al-Kitāb are. They are presented to the Muslims with the loving care of a God who wants these Ahl al-Kitāb to recognize themselves and take heed. At this point, the social and political bloc of Muslims, the Ummah, is assured that it will not be harmed by these Ahl al-Kitāb when they turn belligerent. These posturing Ahl al-Kitāb can never undermine the Muslim community because the Ummah has Allah (ﷻ) and these fraudulent Ahl al-Kitāb have only high claims and unending contentions. Those who take issue with Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence on earth will end up suffering in the coming life; nothing in this world can protect them from that eventuality.

You are indeed the best Ummah that has ever been integrated unto humanity [for its well being]; you require [and authorize] the practice of the common good and you disallow [and do not authorize] the common wrong, and you are committed to Allah.

Now if the followers of earlier scripture had attained to [this kind of] divine commitment, it would have been for their own good; [but only a few] among them are such adherents, while most of them are deviant. [But] these [types] can never inflict more than a passing distress on you; and if they fight against you, they will turn their backs upon you [in flight], and will not be sustained.

Overshadowed by abjection are they wherever they may be, except [when they bind themselves again] in a bond with Allah and a bond with men; for they have earned the burden of Allah's condemnation, and are overcast by humiliation; all this [has befallen them] because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah's *āyāt* and in killing the prophets against all rectitude: all this, because they broke with Allah, and persisted in transgressing the bounds of righteousness (3:110–112).

The first part of this discourse is no small assertion. Devout and honest Muslims are charged with an onerous and profound responsibility. By performing these tasks, the Muslims become illustrious and esteemed. When these integrated Muslims reach that rank of honor and prestige, they do so in an absence of ignorance and arrogance. Listen to Allah's (ﷺ) words carefully,

You [the committed and united Muslims] are in truth the best social order [Ummah] that has ever been merged into humanity [for its prosperity]: you compel [and legitimize] the common good and you interdict [and outlaw] the common wrong, and you are dedicated to Allah (3:110).

This is a rebuttal of those who think that Muslims are automatically “the best.” From this *āyah* we should understand that we, the pledged Muslims, are not going to be able to reach the status of “the best” until we are united, as we were instructed to be in the previ-

ous *āyāt* (3:99–105); and until we become the standard-bearers of an authoritative social force that is able to demand and make legal the common good while simultaneously preventing and making illegal the common wrong.

In other words, the devout and engaged Muslims are expected to become the vanguard of humanity. This is no simple task; and Muslims are not expected to forfeit or relinquish this role because of an inaccurate perception that they either lack or need power. Muslims who have *taqwá* are immune to such perceptions. This *āyah* implies that the allegiant Muslims are the leaders of mankind; and this too is no simple statement. If you are the best, you are expected to lead. And if the collected and combined Muslims are “the best” in Allah’s (ﷻ) words then they are expected to lead. Societies in this world do not operate in a vacuum. If this united Islamic Ummah is not going to lead then another less qualified social grouping will step into the vacuum and lead, one way or another. And if this Ummah is supposed to lead, then why are the Muslims of today leaderless or being led and misled in every fumbling direction?

One answer to this question is that Muslims, the way they have been for the past few generations, have nothing to offer. When the Qur’an becomes meaningless to these hollow Muslims, they have no understandings of it to pass on to others who are in need of it. The Qur’an and its human adherents are expected to fashion social behavior and fill in the information that is required in the behavioral sciences. But at the present time, when the titular and ritual Muslims are on the bottom of the totem pole, “Muslim social scientists” have become nothing more than receptacles and conveyors of ideas and experiences that emerge from a *jāhili* context. Muslim “thinkers” do not launch genuine ideas that arise from groundbreaking experiences; Muslims know only what it means to be led and controlled by others. The Muslims are not in control of social forces and are unable to exert the influence necessary to mainstream the common good and defeat the common wrong.

If the early Muslims who lived and breathed this Qur’an were to come back to life and take a look at today’s Muslims, they would

not believe their eyes. The Qur'anic and prophetic Muslims of the vanguard of the Ummah were role models and pathfinders for a world looking for heroes, ideals, and salvation. When Muslims took the lead, due to their understanding of and reliance on Allah (ﷻ), and their sense of political and social responsibilities, other peoples and realms of the world were happy to identify with and follow these Islamic forerunners. Peoples who came into contact with that societal Islam fell in love with it because it was altruistic and sensitive. Why did the populations in Arabia and thousands of miles beyond become Muslims? Because they were anxious and eager to identify with an Islamic Ummah that could socially and behaviorally integrate them into its directional course and anchor their new and emerging contributions into a cumulative set of achievements.

The Islamic Ummah was not made for toeing other peoples' lines; the Muslim Ummah was made to lead, and to lead with modesty, decency, and humility. Its confidence comes from the certainty of its relationship with Allah (ﷻ). The Islamic Ummah does not gain this position by displaying an isolationist posture; the Ummah does not deserve this high position when it withdraws from the affairs of man. The Ummah is honored by this role precisely because it relates to and belongs to other peoples. It belongs to them because they are in need of it, even if they are unaware of this need. They are in need of it because Allah (ﷻ) is with this Ummah; and Allah's (ﷻ) detailed involvement, in the way this Ummah makes its decisions and assesses its choices, ensures that it is not self-aggrandizing or arrogant. When Muslims commit themselves to Allah (ﷻ) as an *ummaḥ* they are charged with implementing Allah's (ﷻ) will on earth. This is not a simple-minded mission that can be fulfilled by intensive rituals or a vague spirituality that avoids addressing the difficult social and political issues of human societies. Has no one ever wondered why in those formative years of Islam there was a phenomenal growth of this *dīn*, despite the fact that the early Muslims controlled no major resources, even water; while at the present time, the *dīn* of Islam is regressing, especially in its political character, when Muslims are in control of the world's most precious resources? This just goes to show that nostal-

gic fantasies about the “Islamic Ummah” as a unity of secular nation-states in the Muslim world are the stuff of which irrelevant ritual *dīns* are made of.

Perhaps this loss of the status of an *ummaḥ* in our time is best illustrated by the case of Turkey. Turkey, the nation-state built on the heartland of the old Ottoman Sultanate, has spent much of the last few years virtually on its knees begging and pleading to be accepted into the European Union, a key part of the global geopolitical structure of *kufr*. Successive Turkish governments, both secular military ones and “Islamist” civilian ones, have bent over backward to appease their European masters, in the hope of being granted entry into the secular establishment. And, as to be expected, when full-dress and white-tie Turkish Muslims prayed for admission into the religion of *kufr* on par with their *Euro-kufr* counterparts, they were rebuffed and snubbed. Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, a former French president who was in charge of drafting the EU’s proposed constitution, put the European position bluntly, “Turkey is not a European country, and its admission to the European Union would lead to that organization’s demise.”¹⁶¹ The former French president said this despite all the Turks’ efforts in virtually prostrating themselves before Zionist Israel, and their near-total subservience to its American patron. D’Estaing had a sobering effect on just a few secular Turkish elitists, who finally mustered the courage to refer to the European exclusion of “Muslim” Turkey as “a Christian club.”

Turkey “has a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life... It is not a European country,” d’Estaing said, adding that “Turkey’s capital, Ankara, is not in Europe” and that “95% of its population lives outside Europe.”¹⁶² The Europeanization drive to secularize Turkey has placed the Masonic politicians and Zionist generals in Turkey in a very difficult position indeed — transfer 95% of the Turkish population into European Istanbul and then move the Turkish capital from Ankara to that same area, and the European masters *might* consider further Turkish pleas to be admitted into the union of *kufr*! But when it serves the purposes of the European and Western forces of *kufr* to shed Turkish blood to pro-

tect Western interests and raise the Western standard of living, despite Turkey's small toehold on the west bank of the waterway between the Black and Mediterranean seas, Turkey has been considered a "European power" for several generations, being as it is a member of NATO and the Council of Europe, a deliberative body without significant influence.¹⁶³

The remarks of president d'Estaing have intensified the identity crisis that has been consuming the Euro-minded Turks for a long time. The French government, in the way governments always behave, distanced itself from the statement of its former president. Some EU officials even demanded his resignation. In Turkey, an aggravated editorial writer asked, "If Jews can be Europeans, why not Turks?" The question, however, should be, "If Jews can abandon God, why cannot the Turks?" The once indomitable Turks, whose geographical fortune is to have a small sliver of their land in Europe, still have to come to grips with who they really are.

This is an example of the plight of contemporary Muslim leaders who choose not to listen to Allah's (ﷻ) words in this impeccable Book and prefer to assimilate into the world of *kufr*. This pandering to *kufr* has not been without a payoff — the United States, at least, regards Turkey as a trusted and loyal ally. In Europe, however, Turkey's historical reputation as the "scourge of Christendom" remains dominant, mainly as a result of centuries of Turkish conquests that were stopped only at the gates of Vienna in 1683 by a heavy charge of Polish cavalry. This history explains the Europeans' particular glee at the decline of the Ottoman empire, when, in the 19th century, it became known as "the sick man of Europe."

At another level an influx of Turkish "guest workers" in Western Europe since the 1960s — now numbering over two million, mainly in Germany — has convinced many Europeans that Muslim Turks do not assimilate well. Obviously had these Turks been observant of the meanings in this Book of truth and reality, they would not have been so anxious to enter into the European establishment of *kufr*. This is not meant to single out the Turks; officials in other Muslim countries are similarly craven in their atti-

tude, but the Turkish example stands out for its leaders' desperation to gain junior-grade access into the domain of what they evidently regard as a superior civilization.

What goes unnoticed by many present-day Muslims is that to become an *ummaḥ* the Muslims have to be in control of their own affairs. They have to make decisions for themselves; and to do that they need power. Just as a human body cannot exist without a backbone, a society cannot thrive without a “power-structure.” The imperative of power is implied in being an *ummaḥ* — one cannot imagine a strong, viable *ummaḥ* without the due exercise of power. The *āyah* goes a step further and says that this implicit power becomes explicit through the legalization of the common good and the illegalization of the common iniquity. This fulfilment of the Ummah through its exercise of power becomes a service to all peoples. In this manner the Ummah becomes the best social unit ever to have played a role in the history of human societies. What a difference there is between the Ummah fulfilling its power imperatives, and thus rendering a service to the rest of humanity, and the prevalent abuse of power and its concentration today by those who say they are “Christians” or “Jews.”

The rationale for this lethal and brutal abuse of power is based on their traditional religious attitudes that contend they are God's children to the exclusion of other peoples — in the case of the Christians — or God's chosen people to the exclusion of other races — the Jews. Muslims, by contrast, do not harbor such “scriptural arrogance.” Once the Muslims manage to become a united, focused, social power on earth, as a single Ummah in the real, Qur'anic sense of the word — rather than the sixty-odd nation-states that currently fragment the Islamic East — it becomes their duty to serve the rest of humanity by promoting the common good and eradicating the common evil.

This is a task at the level of command and control. Individuals operating separately in society will never be able to fulfil this enormous task. It takes a social structure to make these types of things happen. And this social structure, by necessity, needs a definitive hierarchy that will be able to enforce its will without being oppres-

sive, and be socially receptive without appearing to be weak. The *ma'rūf* is what Allah (ﷻ) decrees to be acceptable, good, and worthy, and so it is accepted as such by all right-thinking people; the *munkar* is similarly what Allah (ﷻ) decrees to be objectionable, bad, and unworthy. Because of their God-given *fitrah*, humans share an instinctive agreement about the nature of *ma'rūf* and *munkar*, unless they are tempted away from it. An example of the *ma'rūf* is narrowing the distance between the rich and the poor, eliminating discrimination between men and women, and ridding society of racism and other forms of disequilibrium. These are all forms of what may be termed the common good. Everyone with a straight conscience would want to have these things achieved within their own society regardless of religion, color, social status, level of education, or gender.

Scattered individuals do not an *ummaḥ* make, and mutually hostile and competing nation-states do not an *ummaḥ* constitute. An *ummaḥ* should be able to consolidate into a remarkable social unity that is able — through its channels of disciplined power — to obliterate social evil. One example of a social evil, or *munkar*, is *racism*, also known in some circles as *racialism*. This social plague is one of the active or behavioral expressions of exclusivism and is aimed at denying members of certain groups equal access to scarce and valued resources. It goes beyond simply thinking unfavorably about groups or holding negative beliefs about them; it involves putting these separatist ideas into action. Often racism and nationalism reinforce each other, because, by denying designated groups access to resources and services, conditions are created under which those groups can do no more than confirm the stereotypes that inspired the original racist belief. These conditions for racism cannot be eliminated without the disciplined use of power. This regulated use of power is guided by Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet's (ﷺ) precedents, and the people's mass, or at least consensual adherence, to the firm Book. Racial discrimination, as distinct from many other forms of discrimination, is a form of gross *munkar* and operates on a group basis: it works on the perceived attributes and deficiencies of groups, not of individual characteristics. Members of

groups are denied opportunities or rewards for reasons unrelated to their capabilities, industry, and general merit; they are judged solely on their membership in an identifiable group, which is erroneously thought to have a racial basis.

The racial discrimination that draws its social acceptability from the “power of the state” may range from the use of derogatory labels, such as *kike* or *nigger*, to the denial of access to such institutional resources as housing, education, justice, political participation, and so on.¹⁶⁴ The actions may be intentional or unintentional. The use of the terms *racialist* and *racial discrimination* has decreased in recent years as racism and institutional racism have been resisted by their victims. *Institutional racism*, in particular, is now used widely to describe the discriminatory nature and operations, however unwitting, of large-scale organizations or entire societies.

We Muslims are responsible for making ourselves an *ummah* in which we can provide the rest of the suffering world a living example of how life can be regulated and relationships can be conducted without the friction of racism. Racism cannot disappear by individual Muslims going to personalized *masjids* to offer private *ṣalāh* in what is supposed to be a public *masjid* within a universal Ummah. Racism is much more institutionalized than the self-centered rituals of personal Muslims. Bilāl, Ṣuhayb, and Salmān — all non-Arabians — became full members of the Islamic society not because of powerless ritualistic Muslims but rather because of the disciplined administration of power in the early Islamic society of Arabia.

The Muslim Ummah is not a *nation* in the technical sense of the word. A *nation* is any sizable group of people united by common bonds of geography, religion, language, race, custom and tradition, and through shared experiences and aspirations. The term is often used interchangeably with *state*, but not all national groups have achieved statehood, although they all aspire to. Moreover, the nation and the state may be essentially the same, as in the case of a nation-state like Ireland or Turkey; or a state may be multinational, as are Switzerland and Russia. Modern nations began to emerge from feudalism in the ninth century CE. The “community of nations” was given political and legal recognition by the Peace of

Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War in 1648.¹⁶⁵

This concept of forging people together, whether they are a “majority” ruling over a minority or minorities within a “nation-state,” or whether they are a particular race imposing its political culture on other races, has come out of a particularly European history and experience. None of this applies to the concept of the *ummaḥ*. The *ummaḥ* is bound by its covenant to Allah (ﷻ) — and this cuts across all geographic, denominational, linguistic, racial, and traditional barriers. The re-consolidation of the Ummah has yet to be accomplished. Any reference by Muslims to a current Islamic Ummah is false and misleading if it refers to something current and complete, rather than a potential that remains to be realized. In our present time there is no united Muslim political will that spans the area from Gibraltar to Jakarta. It simply does not exist. There are Muslim individuals, and there are Muslim peoples. But combining Muslim individuals and Muslim peoples does not an *ummaḥ* make. There has to be a social contract that politically motivates the popular will of the Muslims to become a disciplined, solidified, and active mass of people. A singular political willpower has to be expressed in the form of a *united* Islamic state; and when this is accomplished there will be an Ummah. This follows from the *āyāt* below,

Certainly, [O you who are committed to Me], this Ummah of yours is one single Ummah, since I am the Sustainer of you all: conform, then, to Me [alone]! (21:92).

And, indeed, this Ummah of yours is one undivided *ummaḥ*, since I am the Sustainer of you all: remain, then, conscious [of My power] (23:52).

In the modern political *jāhiliyah* the European nation-state has provided a concept of collective identity in the West with which the individual can identify. The results have not always been good, for many national groups have built their unity on a real or imagined fear and a shared hatred of other groups, or on a desire to bring

others under their dominion. These conflicting national interests, which characterize this world’s political *jāhiliyah* system, have contributed to the instability of international relations and to the outbreak of wars.

The Muslims who read this Qur’an have to snap out of the illusion that there is an Ummah when there are almost 60 nation-states chaining them down. This Ummah is meant for *ikhrāj*: a merging and a fusion into the world’s human and social reality. Today’s cell blocks, otherwise referred to as nation-states, have caused the Muslim “religious” persons to “withdraw” from the political role elucidated in the above *āyāt*. The end-purpose of empires is to enslave and oppress innocent populations thousands of miles away from the empire’s capital. This attitude stimulates tyrannical policies that eventually come back to haunt and destroy the emperor and his empire. This is as true of the ancient Roman empire as it is of the modern American empire. The ego within the chief executive resounds with the narcissism of his administration, which echoes the ideological self-centeredness of the race, which reverberates with the false pride of the nation-state. This poisonous brew has given the world colonial and imperial powers, which are out to occupy other peoples’ lands, seize their natural resources, plunder their wealth, conquer space, and then conveniently deny that their strategy is at odds with God.

It will take a real Ummah to correct this global folly. This Ummah cannot be constituted without a political order; and this political order has to meet the standards that have come to man from heaven. The *munkar* has to be redefined in the current Muslim mind from being something akin to personal behavioral deviation to regaining its full and natural meaning of social perversion, political oppression, economic inequality, and racial discrimination. In other words *munkar* has to cover the scope of the wholesale but organized tyranny that rules today. Likewise, *ma’rūf* has to regain its full range of meaning. It cannot be left in the individualized sense that is commonplace nowadays. *Ma’rūf* is the return of values, principles, ethics, and moral standards into the political culture of the time. A congregation or a community falls short of what *ummah* means. A

congregation, a community, or even a society does not necessarily preclude dictatorship, oppression, and polyarchy. But when there is an *ummaḥ*, there exists a social force that is constituted upon its allegiance and commitment to Allah (ﷻ). It works to eradicate the official *munkar* while expanding the day-to-day and popular *ma'rūf*. This can never be accomplished if Muslims continue to refer to European or Western political experiences in their own attempts to constitute an *ummaḥ* so that they can assume the responsibilities of *al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-nahy 'an al-munkar*.

This whole process can develop when committed Muslims deal with the problems of the day at the level outlined above. Dedicated Muslims have a good sense of their relationship with Allah (ﷻ). They understand their human ambitions and can appreciate their human limitations. They will not become emperors as long as the fervor of *īmān* lives on in their social and political contract of governance. The moral character of this cadre of Muslim vanguards guarantees there will not be any institutionalized *munkar* within the Islamic Ummah. The less-spoken fact of this matter is that there is a moral authority inside the kernel and essence of this Ummah that corresponds to its will to translate this moral authority into a civic authority.

Devout and committed Muslims who are the backbone and willpower of the Ummah should not delude themselves. There will be difficult and trying times, and the only sure way out of dilemmas and setbacks is to be confident of Allah's (ﷻ) presence in whatever decision is made to expunge the *munkar* and to expand the *ma'rūf*. It is not a simple task to elevate our sense of responsibility to this level when we are forced to consider, think about, analyze, and then prepare to take action against hegemonic forces and oppressive powers — forces and powers that constitute cartels, kingdoms, and empires. If Allah (ﷻ) is not with this Ummah, we need not engage the “superpowers” in a battle or a war whose consequences we can all foretell. If we have a consolidated Islamic political will that is willing to take on the *munkar* while fighting for the *ma'rūf*, then we have an Ummah. Correspondingly, if there are two billion Muslims who do not understand that both *ma'rūf* and *munkar* have societal

attributes, not to mention the capability of assuming such responsibilities as *al-amr* and *al-naḥy*, then we do not have an Ummah.

There is a hadith that almost all of us heard at one time or another while we were growing up,

*Whoever sees a munkar should counteract it with force; if he is not able to do it [by force] he should counteract it by speaking up against it; and if he is not able to do it [by words] then he should oppose it in his heart and this is the most infirm expression of īmān.*¹⁶⁶

What goes unsaid about this hadith is the direct relationship of *īmān* with the level of activity that is required to alter or countermand the *munkar*. This is a barometer hadith; the quantity and quality of *īmān* is gauged by the amount of effort that is exerted to wipe out *munkar*. If *munkar* is thought to characterize social inequality, racism, economic exploitation, capitalism, empires “monkeying around with banana republics,” etc., then it follows that the task of “change” can only come when force is applied by a consolidated *ummaḥ*. Another hadith brings the issue into sharp focus,

*The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “When the Children of Israel got mired up in disobedience they were put on notice by their scholars to refrain. But they did not refrain. Consequently these [Israeli] scholars began to socialize with the disobedient flock: they sat together, they ate and drank together... At that point Allah caused their hearts to collide with each other. These same people were condemned by David and Jesus, the son of Mary.” The Prophet (ﷺ) then [raised himself from the comfortable position he was in and] said, “By He Who has my soul, you [the committed Muslims] shall check those with these types of tendencies until they are bound by the ḥaqq [the truth and merit].”*¹⁶⁷

The importance of promoting the *ma‘rūf* from its moral dimensions into its political and social sphere, while demoting the

munkar from the social fabric of life cannot be overemphasized. The Prophet (ﷺ) also said in various hadiths,

*Whenever a civil wrong is done on earth and is opposed by witnesses to it, that opposition of theirs vindicates them of the civic crime and places them at a distance from the crime. And as for those who are absent from the crime but are satisfied with its occurrence they may be considered attestants to it.*¹⁶⁸

*One of the most substantial forms of jihad is a statement of justice to [the face of] a tyrannical potentate.*¹⁶⁹

*The superior martyr was Ḥamzaḥ as well as a man with authority and force who defies a tyrant, and who is killed in the process.*¹⁷⁰

These hadiths and many others establish the fact that an Islamic Ummah is one that is out there in the real world dealing actively and militarily with *ma'rūf* and *munkar*. There is no escape from this duty; even for purposes of survival the committed Muslims must bear arms to protect their *dīn* and way of life. And today their *dīn* is threatened by the preponderance of the *munkar* and the dearth of the *ma'rūf*.

How Christianity Opened the Door to Secularization

That we Muslims are not living in a vacuum should be clear from these *āyāt* and the facts of life all around us. And what comes shining through is that Allah (ﷻ) is teaching us the lessons we are having a very difficult time learning. It is because of people of scripture that we find ourselves in the difficult position we are in. These people of scripture are the nominal Jews, Christians, and "Muslims." So what does Allah (ﷻ) say to this crowd that is centered around the "Judeo-Christian" experience,

Now if the followers of prior scriptures had committed themselves to Allah [in this sense], it would have been

for their own good; [but only a few] among them are committed, while most of them are iniquitous (3:110).

This *āyah* has a razor sharp edge to it. But it need not cut anyone, Jew or Christian, if they were to adhere to the truth. Why should Jews and Christians be upset with Muslims telling them that if they commit themselves, their lives, and their societies to Allah (ﷻ), it would be to their own advantage? If Muslims deviate (and many of us have deviated), the same *āyah* should be read to them; and the same thing should be said to all who deviate because Allah (ﷻ) is not biased toward or against any “religious” affiliation. He speaks the truth and He expects people to adhere to it. However much Muslims ought to discourage strictly theological haggling among people of scripture, the immediate issue is that the perceptions the “Christians” and “Jews” have of whatever is left of their scriptures do not provide a basis and a structure for a social order. It may have taken the followers of a partial Bible 1,500 years to realize that the only way they would be able to build their “nation-states” and their hyper-power empires would be to break from the Church.

What followed throughout the last five centuries was a gradual break from God Himself, until the present day, in which God has been expelled from social and human life altogether. At least, that is how the current governments and establishments in “Christian” America and Europe behave. Today’s behavioral sciences in the Judeo-Christian part of the world are rootless and spineless. That is what happens when “intellectuals” and “social scientists” try to develop ideas of human behavior that are not guided by Allah’s (ﷻ) infallible words, His immaculate Scripture, and His moving mercy. The people who count themselves as Jews and Christians need not suffer any longer in this damning behavioral wilderness. Allah (ﷻ) does not intend to hurt anyone’s feelings and Muslims are not happy when the words of truth are misconstrued and appear offensive to those who are supposed to know better. Hence, **“If the adherents of former scripture had attained to [this kind of] commitment, it would have been for their own good...”**

This Qur'an is an open book. Everyone is summoned to its meanings. Some people of previous scripture may consider or contemplate the meanings of this open Book, however most of them will still resist and deny, **"...[but only a few] among them are such covenant bearers, while most are iniquitous."**

For the record, in those early years of Islam in Arabia and in the lifetime of Muhammad (ﷺ), there were some people of scripture who had no prejudice in their understanding of the Torah or the Gospel. When they heard the Qur'an, they immediately or gradually understood that this Qur'an was of the nature and essence of previous scriptures, and furthermore that this Qur'an was free of man's tampering, so they comfortably and conscientiously yielded to Allah (ﷻ) and became Muslims. Among them were 'Abdullāh ibn Salām, Asad ibn 'Ubayd, Tha'labah ibn Shu'bah, and Ka'b ibn Mālik. This *āyah*, **"...[but only a few] among them commit themselves [to Allah], while most of them are aberrant"** refers to these individuals and others like them. But it also refers to the fact that this is the way it is always going to be: there will always be some Christians and Jews who will be able to overcome their prejudices and bigotry, recognize the truth of the Qur'an and Islam, and then declare their allegiance to this truth. But these will remain a few compared to the many other "Christians" and "Jews" who will remain captive to their dogmatism and fanaticism, and hence will continue to display their hostility toward Islam and those grounded humans who are trying their best to yield to Allah (ﷻ).

This cunning and unscrupulous behavior is shown in the way these individuals have effectively annulled their allegiance to God and apostle, yet turn around and affirm they are God's chosen people and that only they will be "saved." Their greed to possess God's "religion" is as voracious as their greed to possess other peoples' lands and resources. Because of this they have emotional and psychological difficulties in equating all God's Prophets and Messengers (ﷺ) with each other. They want to identify with whomever they can "fit" into their worldly and selfish interpretation of God's word. This favoritism they show toward some prophets to the exclusion of others is basically what has become of

the Yahūdī inability to tolerate Muslims who affirm Muhammad (ﷺ) as the last prophet and apostle, and successor of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (ﷺ). Deep down in the recesses of their psychology is a racist interpretation of scripture that denies Muhammad (ﷺ) his status as prophet because he is not an Israeli. Even this type of racism is selective — racism within racism — because Muhammad (ﷺ) was Semitic, and they cannot deny that. So they cling to their prejudice by saying that Muhammad (ﷺ) does not come from the genetic line of the Children of Israel.

These types have “emotionally” judged Muhammad (ﷺ) without ever dealing with him in their minds. They have had over 1,400 years to consider this Qur’an and this Prophet (ﷺ) but they have been in denial about this issue and its implications. They managed to avoid it when the Church was calling the shots in Europe for the first seven centuries after Islam spread in Arabia and the world; and they have managed to avert a rational encounter with the Qur’an and Islam during the past seven centuries when the time was right for them to break away from their Church. In other words their deep-seated prejudice against the Qur’an, Muhammad (ﷺ), and Islam expressed itself when they were “religious” and again when they turned “secular.” When it comes to Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and the committed Muslims, both the religiosity and the secularism of Jews and Christians are superficial; all that is genuine is their dislike of and discrimination against those who have made a commitment and who honor their covenant with Allah (ﷻ).

What should be understood here is that at the time these *āyāt* were revealed there were Muslims in Madinah and Arabia who had close and diverse ties with the Yahūd. At that time, the Yahūd still had weight and influence in Madinah. Their economic leverage in Madinah, combined with their military might in Khaybar,¹⁷¹ a Jewish settlement north of Madinah, left a strong impression on the Muslims, who would always calculate for “the Yahūdī factor.” It took direct words from Allah (ﷻ) to these types of Muslims — relevant now as well as then — to relieve the Muslims of their inclination to appease these covenant-violators. The truth is that these Yahūd were of no consequence because they had profaned God, dis-

torted His word, disobeyed His command, and violated His norms. United though they may appear to be on the outside, internally they are divided and desperate. Allah (ﷻ) has stamped them with a lack of esteem and honor. Add to this collective disintegration the decomposition of their personal character, and then Allah's (ﷻ) words can be better appreciated, “...and they [Yahūd] have been clamped with *dhillah* and *maskanaḥ* [chagrin and bewilderment]” (2:61).

In today's world there is a culture war that most harmfully touches on Israel's security and is centered on the Zionist State's relations with Palestinian Arabs. This internal Yahūdī division embroils the secular Israeli parties of the right and the left. It has its origins in the confused ideology of the early Zionist pioneers, who were both militant racists and rather abstract or idealistic socialist reformers. This odd combination may eventually explode under the growing pressure and the increased heat that combatant Muslims are putting on the Zionist establishment. The more stubborn Sephardim, or underclass Jews, opted for what they call a “Greater Israel” and an aggressive Israeli military. All of these tendencies settled into the rightist Likud party.¹⁷²

Other Israelis preferred a political approach to a military one. These leftist and liberal Jews, many of whom are Ashkenazi Jews from Europe, came to prefer an accommodation with pacified Palestinians rather than living within a garrison state. These types have taken issue with nationalists, racists, and militants who dwell within the rightist and conservative part of the Zionist establishment. Neither of these positions can come to terms either with the dispossessed Arabs and Palestinians, or the fallout that has accumulated since they both got away with the grand larceny of stealing the Holy Land and forging on it an artificial racist entity called “Israel.”

These Zionist Israelis need not be of much concern to a budding Islamic reality. The Qur'an brings their character and how to deal with it in focus,

These [types] can never inflict more than a passing hurt on you; and if they fight against you, they will

turn their backs upon you [in flight], and will not be sustained. Overshadowed by abasement are they wherever they may be, except [when they bind themselves again] in a bond with Allah and a bond with men; for they have earned the burden of Allah’s condemnation, and are eclipsed by humiliation; all this [has befallen them] because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah’s *āyāt* and in killing the prophets against all right: all this, because they rebelled [against Allah], and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right (3:111–112).

But this promise and assurance applies only to those who are really on Allah’s (ﷻ) side; when they go to war they do so in the company of Allah (ﷻ). This *āyah* and these meanings are not applicable to governments and administrations that have expelled God from their corridors of power, locking Him up in the neighborhood *masjid*. This *āyah* and others like it in the Qur’an are not describing humans who yield to Allah (ﷻ) in their private lives but then submit to other masters in their public affairs.

As an example of this contrast, look at the nationalist and secular “Muslims” who were virtually decimated by the 1948, 1967, 1973, and 1982 wars that were launched by Zionist Israel against Muslims who had abandoned Allah (ﷻ) everywhere except in matters pertaining to personal hygiene and some dietary regulations. Similarly, see what happened to Arabian nationalist militaries in the 50s, 60s, and 70s of the past century, as they were reeling from one military defeat to another. Then compare that to the non-state Islamic combatants of today and how they have caused Israel’s military establishment to recoil in panic. Surely, the committed and combatant Muslims are suffering injuries and turning out martyrs, but this is a short-lived and passing development. For the first time since the Zionist theft of the Holy Land in 1948, the descendants of Khaybar are being reminded of what it means to be with Allah (ﷻ): they see how Hizbullah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas are demonstrating the meanings of this powerful and hal-

lowed Book. The militarily dedicated Muslims in Southern Lebanon, in the West Bank, and in Ghazzah do not go begging for political leverage and military hardware from the US or Europe. They went to Allah (ﷻ) asking Him only for whatever assistance He could provide in their jihad.

These not-so-many combatants for the covenant knew they will be fighting a people who are condemned with abjection wherever they may be. This is their destiny. Wherever the Zionist spirit dwells it brings with it ruin and disaster. The only respite these Zionists have is when other people, such as the Muslims in particular, lose their connection with Allah (ﷻ). Looking at it from this perspective, the imperialist and colonialist occupation of the Ḥijāz and Palestine is a testimony to the fact that the Muslims have abandoned Allah (ﷻ) and His *dīn*. Every inch that the Muslims regain of the Ḥijāz and Palestine becomes testimony to their return to *īmān*. Israel is probably the largest *munkar* ever constructed in the history of mankind; its extensions include the US government, European administrations, and Arabian regimes. Israel, the *munkar*, is not a simple geographical nation-state; it is an amalgam of the international impotence, the political climate, the economic structure, and the psychological inferiority that have gripped the world and paralyzed any opposition when the government of Israel is mentioned.

The only way out of this trance is through the pages of this enlightening Qur'an and the *ṣirāṭ* that takes the Muslims straight to Allah (ﷻ). The Yahūd of the world came to the Holy Land seeking security. When they founded their racist state in the Holy Land, they could not find security. It must be confounding for these smart and brilliant Yahūdīs to realize they have deliberately trapped themselves in death. Zionism is causing them to die as they hold on to a myth that rationalizes the theft of another people's homeland; and Islam is causing them to die as it mobilizes the oppressed people, who have been dispossessed, to regain their legitimate rights. The Zionists chose a European model, the nation-state, as a political platform to express their aspirations, and they alienated the only place on earth where it would have been possible for them to live in civic equality and harmony. These "Jews" came from all around the world with

their history of dislike for the *goyim* and turned upon the unsuspecting Muslims who treated them as fair as God's words can go, until their plan of incrementally usurping the Holy Land was exposed. Today, the Zionist Yahūd have channeled all their ancient animosities against the Muslims of the world. In this way, they continue to earn the encumbrance of Allah's (ﷻ) disapproval. The "Jewish" journey out of history, with all the complaints and grudges they may have had, has landed them in the center of the Islamic world, where their character now is under scrutiny. This bewilderment lives in their conscience and this confusion prevails in their feelings.

Remember that when these *āyāt* were first pronounced, all the military encounters between the God-inspired Muslims and the Yahūd and Christians were decisively settled in favor of the militarily motivated Muslims. That is because the Muslims were not Westernized, were not secularized, and thus were not jeopardized. When Muslims knew they were in the company of Allah (ﷻ) they happily did Allah's (ﷻ) will on earth. Those who became enemies of these Muslims had to seek refuge in one of two choices: either they would have to accede to the standards of justice and the manner of fairness expressed by these God-fearing Muslims, or they would have to bide their time and pray for the day when Muslims would forsake Allah (ﷻ) so that they could have things their way again. And the latter is pretty much where the Muslims find themselves today.

How is it possible for these Yahūd to be in this inglorious position time and again? The words of Allah (ﷻ) explain why: it can happen to any other people, whatever their rituals and religious ceremonies are. It is simply their disobedience of Allah (ﷻ) and their offensive and compulsive attitude in denying Him that causes their downfall and ruin.

All this [has happened to them] because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah's *āyāt* and in killing off the prophets against all that is right: all this, because they agitated [against Allah], and endured in violating the bounds of what is right (3:112).

All of this happened to Yahūd because they fell into the habit of disputing and expressing opposition to Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in the affairs of man — in other words they rejected His *āyāt*. Today this mentality of denying Allah's (ﷻ) power presence in the affairs of man has become an issue that has ensnared many other peoples and societies. This form of *kufr* has attracted non-Yahūdī peoples and has become so prevalent that it merits a closer look.

The secular mind out of which comes secular ideology, a form of *kufr*, is the process of perceived social change in which Allah (ﷻ) and His *dīn* lose social significance. That process may be multifaceted and may occur over a short or long time period. Its major manifestation occurs when the human will — disciplined and directed as it should be by scripture — begins to acquire an “autonomy” from Allah's (ﷻ) will, and thereby loses the social self-restraint, which in scripturally centered societies, it would typically have exercised. More obviously, the secular abandonment of Allah (ﷻ) occurs when men of scripture and sincerity lose access to and control of property and resources; when these men who embody the meanings of scripture begin to diminish in number and lose social status; when Qur'anic and Islamic attitudes, priorities, and habits are increasingly relinquished by the general population; and when scriptural practices are gradually supplanted by material pursuits. This whole process is accelerated by a barrage of controlled thoughts and social engineering of popular perception, which is thus inclined to move against religion in general when it finds serious flaws in individuals and institutions that are supposed to embody scripture. This is particularly true in Europe, but only partially true in the Muslim world. In recent decades the decline in church attendance in the West was an indicator of a serious break with God. In the “anything goes” dogma of the West, one can supposedly be a Christian and a secularist at the same time.

The concept of secularization may have been initially introduced in the arrangements made under the Treaty of Westphalia following the Thirty Years War (1648), when considerable church property was sequestered and placed under the control of secular authorities operating free of church influence and interference.¹⁷³ In

earlier periods of history, notably in the dissolution of the monasteries in England, the phenomenon began to get some traction. Such expropriations were examples of power centers taking shape outside the sphere of church authority. In other words these centers of secular power began to exercise governmental functions away from church regulations and practices. This exclusion of the church from the political sphere of human activities and decisions carried itself into the Muslim world when there was no longer any Muslim seat of power. Secular decision-making applies, in modern circumstances more particularly, to social developments that are neither conscious nor planned, but which affect the character and operation of the social system.

Secularization is not a neutral term when humans are simultaneously offered scriptural guidelines that help them formulate the educational, legal, philosophical, and ideological construct of life they desire to have. Secularization is the human choice to make critical social and life-and-death decisions without reference to what God has to say about the issue. Both secularism and secularization become ideologies that advocate the abolition of scripture and the transfer of ancillary social functions of scripture and revelation to “secular” agencies. Secular agencies here refer to committees or governmental departments that exercise power in a fashion that is not influenced by ethical considerations, scripture, God, or the prophets and their successors.

The impact of secularization has been documented in numerous historical and sociological studies, even when that concept has not been explicitly deployed.¹⁷⁴ A typical example would be the replacement of priests and religious scholars in schools by lay teachers, which occurred in both England and France. The privatization of religion, a process by which religious agencies have relinquished or reduced significant aspects of their erstwhile social and public functions and confined themselves to servicing private needs, is equally seen as one facet of the more general secularization process, and one of its more recent manifestations in Western society.¹⁷⁵

The last two centuries have witnessed the almost complete globalization of secularist *kufī*, major thrusts in this direction begin-

ning with the French Revolution and the creation of two consciously secular regimes, in France and in the USA.¹⁷⁶ In recent Western history, secular *kuf*r has risen as religion has withdrawn from its former institutional primacy. The schism between a faulty and failing Church on one hand and an aggrieved and resentful population on the other hand tipped public opinion in the direction of European governments that were legitimized by democratic procedures and authenticated by rational-legal structures of election and appointment. Hence social policy was no longer a product of man's best understanding of God's Word, which was held to have been a failure; instead, social policy was now to be determined by popular manifesto at a time when most people held grudges against the Church because of their cumulative disappointments with the clergy who were running the Church.

All this came to a head when these church clergymen found themselves on the wrong side of scientific inquiry, rational investigations, and innovative discoveries. Secular *kuf*r had finally established a beachhead on the European continent, and the exercise of social control became the concern of a wide variety of special agencies of the judiciary and the police. Today these agencies have recourse to a battery of technical and bureaucratic devices, from data retrieval systems and traffic lights to fiscal records and, in some countries, identity cards. Knowledge has increasingly become defined as scientific knowledge only; scientific technology has increasingly become controlled by secular agencies, and often exploited for political purposes, particularly the control of people by the state. All of this has been validated by empirical and analytical procedures and subsumed into rational structures of tested theory, while for the education and socialization of children, reliance is placed on professional secular experts.

The decline of influence of the clergy in European public affairs has had the effect of focusing religious attention on the private lives of the few who accept its ministrations. Christianity has become increasingly a matter of private predilection rather than of public responsibility. The globalization of secularism and the privatization of Christianity has placed emphasis on the function of religion as a

source of celebration, solace, and reassurance. Simultaneously, as Christianity has been squeezed out of its earlier role in determining and reinforcing constitutional, political, social, and cultural arrangements, so the opportunity has arisen for the churches to criticize and even to challenge the policies and activities of governments. Some church spokesmen see the process of structural differentiation as altogether beneficial in allowing the churches, now freed from extraneous entanglements, to present a less compromised spiritual message. This reemergence of religion in public life is to be found in the form of Christian democratic parties, Christian liberation theology, and Christian evangelical religiosity.¹⁷⁷

The dominant contention of the secularization thesis is that whereas Christianity once fulfilled latent functions in most or all the institutional areas of society, today those functions are increasingly addressed by deliberate and calculated rational action which makes no reference to God. Modern social systems, unlike traditional societies, operate increasingly on the assumption that the social order is human-made rather than God-willed. Associated with this process there appears to have been a diminution of recourse to traditional Christian values, patterns of thought, and observance of public Christian rites and ceremonies. The atrophy of Christian culture, as the scriptural coloration of individual life and social activities fades, has rendered Christianity an increasingly private concern. Support for established Christian institutions, ideals, teachings, and values was formerly forthcoming from society at large, and in many cases from the state itself. As that support has diminished, so personal faith rather than public application of Christian dogma has become the primary locus of what little Christian commitment remains. Once the relatively integrated Christian culture fragments, those who do persist in seeking a Christian orientation to the world enjoy unrestricted private choice from a diversified range of often newly-emergent and socially unrooted beliefs that offer personal reassurance or therapeutic or compensatory benefit. Widespread indifference, the privatization of such Christian expression as does persist, and the emergence of new movements and cult practices can be regarded as usual accompaniments of the secularization process.

This entire growth of “the religion of secularism” in Europe and its offshoots in Muslim countries is an enormous *munkar*. Yet the Muslim scholars whose responsibility it is to flag this danger to the Muslim masses behave as if this 500-year old *munkar* does not exist. This *munkar* came into existence because of a European reaction to institutionalized religion. It fed on grievances and injustice until it became the main grievance and the prime injustice. Instead of Jews and Christians living with Allah’s (ﷻ) will as they employ their efforts and intellect to be with Him when they make behavioral and social decisions, they turned their backs on Him, failed to distinguish between His word and those of His fallible human creatures, declared war on the way they skewed God’s scripture, and came out of all of this denying and disapproving of God altogether. It is this lengthy process that Allah (ﷻ) is referring to when He says, “...all this [has befallen them, Yahūd and Christians] because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah’s power presence and in slaying the prophets against all right” (3:112).

Here Muslims are expected to look beyond the “blatant *kufr*” and think about the gradual *kufr* as well. It took secular *kufr* centuries to become what it is today. Secular *kufr* is now so well established that many Muslims think they can be Muslims and secularists at the same time. It is because of this kind of schizophrenic break from Allah (ﷻ) that such people would literally kill prophets (ﷺ) in the past. And if they do not kill prophets literally then they kill them figuratively, denying or ignoring all that these prophets and their lifelong experiences stood for and accomplished. And in the post-prophetic period, they have also killed those people of faith who have demonstrated their ability to influence public opinion and move people toward justice. Remember that in another *āyah* in this *sūrah*, Allah (ﷻ) refers to people who

...deny the truth [of Allah’s power presence in human affairs], and kill the prophets without justification and kill people who [are in a position to] authorize [the implementation of] justice (3:21).

Another result of this process has been the failure of men of religion to maintain the religious morals and standards they are supposed to exemplify. The human potential for immoral and offensive behavior, virtually unrestrained in modern secular society, has also found expression in many weak and vulnerable men within the institutions of religion in the secular world. Such deviation is noticed on several levels. In 2000, for example, an eleventh-generation rabbi resigned as president of Reform Judaism's leading seminary over accusations that he had inappropriate relationships with women before taking office in the mid-1990s. The Hebrew Union College board accepted Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman's resignation and appointed Provost Norman J. Cohen as acting president in his place.¹⁷⁸ Revelations of the sexual abuse of women and children by those in authority in religious institutions have become commonplace in both Christian and Jewish communities.¹⁷⁹

In terms of leaders of religious communities abusing their positions to preach hatred against other people, a prominent rabbi drew condemnation for a sermon calling on God to annihilate the Arabs. In a sermon delivered on the occasion of Passover in April 2001, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, a former chief rabbi and founder of the Shas religious party, said, "It is forbidden to be merciful to them. You must send missiles to them and annihilate them. They are evil and damnable." A spokesman for the Shas party said the rabbi was referring only to (Arab) murderers and terrorists. "Only an idiot could understand that the rabbi intended harm to innocents," he said. But even the Israeli government distanced itself from the rabbi's words. "A person of the stature of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef must refrain from bitter words such as these. I suggest we should not learn from the Palestinians and speak in verbal blows," said Meir Sheerit, the justice minister at the time.¹⁸⁰

Considering the sort of behavior and attitudes coming from Yahūdī religious figures, it is rather less surprising to see the actions of a secular Yahūdī state. This is precisely what qualifies Yahūd for displacement, dispossession, and depression. That is why they have been stamped with shame, mortification and the wrath of the Almighty. Much of this also applies to secularized Muslims and

Christians. The word “Muslim” and even the word “Christian” cannot properly be applied to many of those who say they are “Muslims” or say they are “Christians.” Let us face the truth: the majority of “Christians” and “Jews,” and a huge number of “Muslims” have effectively become secular, their only relationship to scripture being the robotic adherence to learned rituals and inherited traditions.

One feature of the history of recent centuries is that the growth of secular *kuf*r in the West, as a result of the failings of the religious institutions there, have spread across the world with Western political power. There may be some excuse for those who call themselves Jews or Christians because they are no longer in possession of the original and perfect scriptures that Allah (ﷻ) provided them. But for those who call themselves Muslims, who are in possession of Allah’s (ﷻ) unadulterated Word, what excuse can there be for joining the company of Jews and Christians and making the same mistakes they have made? And after doing that, how dare we ask Allah (ﷻ), “But how are we losing our battles and why are we being defeated in our wars? Are we not Muslims?” The simple answer to that is that we cannot really be Muslims when we abandon Allah (ﷻ) in our social character, when we deny Allah (ﷻ) His right in our decision-making processes, and when we are so anxious to be accepted by His enemies.

The careful and accurate words of Allah (ﷻ) in the Qur’an take note also of those few scripturalists who are the exception to the rule,

[But] they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier scripture there are responsible people, who recite Allah’s *āyāt* throughout the dark times [of life] and show humility [to Him]. They are committed to Allah and the Last Day, and they [too] establish the general good and eliminate the bad, and they vie with one another in doing what is right; and these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof: for Allah has full knowledge of those who are cautious [of His power] (3:113–115).

The Qur'an says that people of scripture are not all from the same mold; they are not all alike. Some of them are capable of becoming God's covenant bearers in the footsteps of the heroes of Allah's (ﷻ) cause. Their recompense will be the reward given to men of virtue, truth, and sincerity. The Jews and Christians should pay close attention to these wondrous words. Allah (ﷻ) does not lump all of these confused people together. If there are Christians and Jews who bind to Allah's (ﷻ) covenant without bias and prejudice, they are given the credit for their outstanding behavior and untainted accomplishments. There is nothing in this Qur'an or in the life pattern of his final Prophet, Muhammad (ﷺ), that should be offensive to conscientious and truth-seeking Jews and Christians. And once they realize that this Qur'an is in essence and in word Allah's (ﷻ) speech, they will have no difficulty in affiliating with this Book; in doing so they join the procession of prophets (ﷺ) and the community of Muslims. They themselves become the defenders and guardians of the Qur'an and Islam. They prove they are attached to Allah (ﷻ) and are ever aware of the Final Day. They become contributors to the mission of Islam by identifying and enhancing the *ma'rūf* while also identifying and negating the *munkar*. They will do what is right and not be bothered by the prevalence of Islamophobia and other stereotypes that demonize Islam and dehumanize the Muslims. This is Allah's (ﷻ) testimony to Christians and Jews who are able to surmount the malice generated by their churches and synagogues against God's final and lasting words. Notice that the concluding statement in the *āyah* acknowledges the fact that these types of people are sensitive to Allah's (ﷻ) power in human life, **"Allah is keenly aware of those who are careful [of His power]."**

Some Christians and Jews claim that such Qur'anic statements were made by Muhammad (ﷺ) in an attempt to appease the Christians and Jews. Such suggestions are inane. First, these are not Muhammad's (ﷺ) words, but Allah's (ﷻ). Second, neither Muhammad (ﷺ), nor any other of Allah's Prophets (ﷺ), could have been a prophet if he were to appease any human being at the expense of the truth. Observation has shown through the ages how true these words about scripturalists are.

A People's Wealth Status Will Not Protect Them in the End

After clearing this mental hurdle for the reader, the Qur'an moves on to those who are unnaturally convinced that God is powerless, or at least indifferent. These are the types who will have no support when they eventually face their ultimate judgment. Their physical and economic power will mean nothing. They will not be able to spend their way out of their internal convictions and undo with bribes the mortal mistakes they committed in life. In the life to come they will discover they have inflicted terrible damage on their eternal souls. Even if they were the most philanthropic types in their secular god-denying world, that philanthropy will get them nowhere because they are personally disconnected, socially estranged, and strategically cut off from Allah (ﷻ), the source of all good and prosperity. This is what can be understood from Allah's (ﷻ) words,

[But], behold, as for those who are bent on denying the truth [about Allah's worldly power], neither their earthly possessions nor their children will in the least avail them against Allah; and it is they who are destined for the Fire, therein to dwell endlessly (3:116).

These meanings encompass the classes of people on earth who deliberately and mindfully dismiss Allah's (ﷻ) power from any decision they make. And because power cannot be Allah's (ﷻ) and Satan's at the same time, these *kāfirs* directly deny God His power role in human life; they arrogate power to themselves — even though their own lives are transient and episodic — and they indirectly serve as Satan's instruments to abuse this power. The consequences are lethal.

The metaphor of what they spend on the life of this world is that of an icy wind, which strikes the cultivated land of people who have done injustice to themselves, and destroys it; for it is not Allah who does them wrong, but it is they who are wronging themselves (3:117).

The first thing that occurs to one on reading this *āyah* is that people who are arrogant in their pride and power try to rely on their power and wealth to shield them from Allah (ﷻ). Note also that in many instances the Qur’an does not dwell on impoverished *kāfirs* as it does on affluent ones; that is why the combination of *kufr*, wealth, and power is encountered many times throughout this Book. Another thing to note is that the metaphor relates to agricultural and natural life: cultivated land, people, and then a barren territory. All of these atmospheric and climatic conditions are directly tied to the psychology of people who dispute and denounce Allah’s (ﷻ) involvement in the affairs of human society on earth. Allah’s (ﷻ) words go so far as indicating that whatever benevolent and altruistic investments these types of psychological opponents of Allah (ﷻ) place in what appears to be beneficial and advantageous activities (farm crops, agricultural produce, vegetation, making the desert bloom, etc.), the results will be catastrophic. The Qur’anic scenario has us standing at the edge of untold acres of productive fertile land, and then all of a sudden comes a violent storm that burns the produce and the land. And then there is nothing to be harvested, nothing at all.

Those of a secular mind-set look at the devastating results of an unexplainable weather phenomenon and bemoan the losses. They do not have access to the truth of this matter — and that is the humanly sustained opposition to Allah’s (ﷻ) power in these affairs of men. Man has become arrogant; he thinks he has “conquered nature,” which is a not very polite way of saying that he has defeated God. But this metaphor is meant to teach human beings that whatever money or power they have, and however much they try to put it to good use, if all this is done with a mind-set that objects to Allah (ﷻ) and His power and influence in their lives, then the results are cataclysmic and ruinous. It is no wonder, then, that Allah (ﷻ) concludes this scene with the words, “**...it is not Allah who does them injustice, but it is they who do injustice to themselves.**”

The first step in directing social injustice toward humans is the psychological injustice of taking Allah (ﷻ) out of human beings’ thoughts, feelings, and plans. The drastic changes in the

atmospheric and psychological environment on earth are caused by the human psychology that, over a long period of rejecting Allah (ﷻ), induces social injustice, which ends up stimulating a divine response to man's excesses. Man sometimes seems to be a strange creature; he refuses to yield to Allah's (ﷻ) authority in his small, day-to-day decisions, and so ends up succumbing to Allah's (ﷻ) determination in the greater consequences, over time measured in generations, of his actions and errors.

At the end of this long discourse, after Allah (ﷻ) has provided ample information about the behavior of scripturalists and how they deviate, after He points out the confusion and distortions in their position, after He exposes their thoughts and dishonorable behavior toward Muslims, and after He places the responsibility of the covenant upon this new generation of dedicated Muslims, Allah (ﷻ) speaks to the front-line Muslims and tells them not to surround themselves with their natural enemies. Allah (ﷻ) encourages them to march forward and pay no attention to the distractions and noises coming from such people. Muslims should never think for one moment to divulge their inner selves to those who express hostility toward them, their principled interests, and their future success. These words are as relevant and applicable today as they were in Arabia centuries ago. What then can be said about today's nominal Muslims who choose to dismiss such vital guidance? As long as they ignore the Qur'an Allah (ﷻ) will ignore them; and the more they distance themselves from these warnings, the more they will court death and disaster.

Muslims Are to Rebuff *Kāfir* Segments of Ahl al-Kitāb

O you who have committed [to Allah]! Do not encircle yourselves with adjuncts who are not of your commitment-quality. They spare no effort to corrupt you; they would love to see you in trouble. Vehement hatred has already come into the open from out of their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is yet worse. We

have certainly made the signs [thereof] clear to you, if you would but use your reason.

Lo! It is you who [are prepared to] love them, but they will not love you, although you have committed to all of the scripture. And when they meet you, they assert, “We believe [as you believe];” but when they find themselves alone, they gnaw their fingers in rage against you. Say, “Perish in your rage! Behold, Allah has full knowledge of what is in the hearts [of men]!” If good fortune comes to you, it grieves them; and if evil befalls you, they rejoice in it. But if you are patient in adversity and are consciously cautious [of Allah’s power], their guile cannot harm you at all, for verily, Allah encompasses [with His might] all that they do (3:118–120).

These *āyāt* shed light on the conditions of Muslims within their power base as their opponents and enemies began to show their true colors. People of prior scriptures who were in and around Madinah were angry with the coming of Muhammad (ﷺ) and the message of the Qur’an. It is obvious from this narrative that many people of previous scriptures bore an uncontrollable animus toward Muhammad (ﷺ) and the first collective expression of Islam in the area. What is more, even within Muslim society, there were Muslims who were still in awe of these scriptural types, who were in fact enemies of Allah (ﷻ). In order to maintain their pre-Islamic *jāhili* contacts, some Muslims kept friendly relations with these enemies of Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ). Acting as their intimates, they may even have been revealing sensitive information to them. Little did they realize that their association with these non-Muslims might threaten the very survival of the Muslim order in Madinah.

In this area, the early Muslims needed to appreciate the risks inherent in their situation. The new Islamic order had to be aware of the threats facing it in order to survive them. This is a lesson for all Muslims of all times: no degree of Muslim submission, compliance, or accommodation, however amicable and fraternal it may appear, can counter the acute enmity that these so-called scrip-

turalists harbor against Muslims of genuine commitment. This valuable lesson was not meant for one generation, and it is not an anthropological relic. It is as true today as it was back then. Today's fast-moving events confirm this sparkling truth.

For all the humility and meekness that are at the core of the Islamic character, and with all the false information that goes around and comes around about how civilized and cultured the “Judeo-Christian” West is, Muslims who read the Qur’an today, and struggle for a better world tomorrow, must rise above their modesty and humbleness, and appreciate the harsh reality behind the carefully-cultivated facade. We must brace ourselves for a rude awakening about the true nature of the nominal Christians and Jews, who can stir up enough enmity to destroy our societies through wars and “world orders.” Muslims have to learn what really makes the *kāfir elements of scripture* — *al-ladhīna kafarū min ahl al-kitāb* — tick.¹⁸¹ And as we do that, we should learn to appreciate the truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity of true Muslims, in sharp contrast to the deviousness, hypocrisy, and arrogance of the deniers of scripture.

When forward-looking Muslims begin to see the issue in these terms, they will acquire a sense that has long been absent: that the pseudo-scriptural Jews and Christians are lacking in their human relations with Allah (ﷻ). Then Muslims should learn not to place any trust, confidence, or credibility in supposed Jews and Christians who are in positions of power and government in the current world order. This is a far cry from the situation nowadays, when senior officials in practically every Muslim country turn to Christian imperialists and Yahūdī Zionists in the name of improving the lives of ordinary Muslims. In point of fact, these imperialists and Zionists turn a profit on Muslim money that is invested in usurious institutions, and protect the regimes that have divided one Ummah into 60-odd mutually hostile nation-states.

The violations of the meanings of these *āyāt* by the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” routinely dwarf those of other Muslim nation-states. Allah (ﷻ) says in this passage of *āyāt* that we, the Muslims, should not, cannot, and ought not be contained by a circle of people who are petty and flawed. Yet true to their subservient nature,

the Saudi government in the year after 9/11 launched an aggressive public relations offensive denying that it had any links with militant Islamic movements, and that it posed any threat to the interests of the US; furthermore, it announced a series of steps taken to restrict the activities of Muslim charities. These were of course couched as restrictions designed to curb support for “terrorism,” but the intention and effects were clearly wider.¹⁸²

The Saudi royals are a perfect example of those who maintain good relations with the enemies of Allah (ﷻ). The Saudi practice is to open their hearts, their doors, and even their sanctuaries to the avowed enemies of Allah (ﷻ). This is done while the trigger-happy imperialist “Christians” and fanatical Zionist “Jews” make clear their total and unrepentant animosity toward the dedicated Muslims. **“Vehement hatred has already come into the open from out of their mouths, but what their hearts hold back is yet worse...”** No Muslim who reads the Qur’an should be surprised that such things are happening. When we disregard the guidance Allah (ﷻ) has provided us, we inevitably suffer the consequences.

Lo! Here you are loving them and they do not love you, although you adhere to all of scripture. And when they meet you, they assert, “We are committed to Allah [as you are];” but when they are detached [from you], they chew on their fingers in fury against you (3:119).

This lesson ought to be clear enough for all Muslims. It has a clear and practical relevance to the real world we live in. Look around and see. In 2002, the government of Saudi Arabia forked over \$14.6 million to Washington-based Qorvis Communications for public relations and advertising; that tops the record \$14.2 million that Hill and Knowlton, another public relations firm, got from Citizens for a Free Kuwait in the early 1990s to build support for the Second Gulf War.¹⁸³ Look at how these pathetic sleep-with-the-enemy Saudi royals are paying “top dollar” for imperialist and Zionist scriptural pretenders to look at them favorably and accept them on terms of Yahūdī propaganda and misinformation.

And yet many Muslims, heavy on rituals and light on understanding, have great difficulty understanding the simple points made in this divine Book. The contempt of these Zionists and imperialists for Islam and Muslims is seen all over the world. The CIA and other government agencies have played major roles in the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, killing suspected Islamic activists, with no regard for the lives of women, children, and bystanders. Cases of random shootings at Muslim targets, air attacks on anything that moves — including refugee columns and wedding processions — murderous invasions of homes, and the total destruction of villages, are commonplace. American troops operate in the Muslim world today as the uncivilized Indians were portrayed in old movies of the “wild west.” At the same time, their contempt for Islam and Muslims is demonstrated by their behavior in Muslim countries. CIA field officers in particular are known to have a taste for whiskey, booze, and hard liquor. In their proven indifference and disregard for Islamic culture, the CIA runs a secret bar — called the *Talibar*, a pun on the word *Taliban* — in the Afghan capital of Kabul where bleary-eyed and fatigued Americans and others can indulge in a “much-desired” whiskey or beer. Invitations to this so-called “moonshine zone” are highly desired among Western journalists and “aid workers” who are supposed to be telling the truth about the situation in Afghanistan, and helping the ordinary people there.¹⁸⁴

How much evidence do Muslims need of the truth of these Qur’anic words? To explain the West’s real attitude toward Muslims — as reflected in Western policies toward the Muslim world — one need only look at the examples of evangelist Christians such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, bearing in mind the growth of evangelical Christianity in the US and its influence on American politics.¹⁸⁵ Robertson is the founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in Virginia Beach, which annually can collect up to \$97 million in tax-free profit. He also ran for the presidency of the United States in 1998. In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon, Robertson rode into battle on an Israeli jeep, saying that in waging war on Lebanon, Israel was doing God’s will. He famously described

Islam (not Muslims) as “a violent religion bent on world domination.” In late 2002, he and Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, Inc., provoked controversy by suggesting that abortionists, feminists, gays, and liberal groups were partly responsible for the 9/11 attacks. In early 2002, Robertson suggested that Muslims in America had come “as missionaries possibly to spread the doctrine of Islam.” He then went on to say, “But, ladies and gentlemen, I have taken issue with our esteemed president in regard to his stand in saying Islam is a peaceful religion. It’s just not. And the Qur’an makes it very clear, if you see an infidel, you are to kill him.”

Should the Muslims not understand something about the nature of Western civilization, when they hear such words coming from a prominent “Christian” public figure in the leading country of the modern West? Such statements are not simpleminded and artless expressions, especially when they fill the airwaves and circulate in the public mind. Robertson’s statements along with similar expressions of bitter and deep-seated ill-will by Christian leaders such as Falwell, Franklin Graham, Hal Lindsey, and many others, cannot be taken lightly. There are some 80,000 Christian fundamentalist pastors in the US, many of whom broadcast from 1,000 Christian radio stations and 100 Christian television stations, and the vast majority of whom are hostile toward Muslims.

Considering that many American politicians boast of their Christian faith and credentials, it is unsurprising to see similar vitriol from American governmental officials. In late 2001, US attorney general John D. Ashcroft characterized Islam as “a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for Him” compared to Christianity, “a faith in which God sends his son to die for you.”¹⁸⁶ These remarks, from the US equivalent of the minister of justice in other countries, were approvingly broadcast on Christian radio stations around the US.¹⁸⁷

Since 9/11, many Muslims seem to have fallen under some kind of spell under the intensity of the attack against them. Those Muslims who “sing” the Qur’an or “dance” to its cadence are exempt, because they have the luxury of being classified by the *kāfirs* as moderate or tolerant Muslims. But even many of those who have

a living and working relationship with the Qur'an have found themselves hiding their true feelings about Islam, Allah (ﷻ), the Qur'an, the Prophet (ﷺ), and Islamic movements. The apologies that were once the reserve of a minority of misguided and irrelevant Muslims have now come from Muslims previously known for their commitment to Islamic self-determination in the Muslim world. Over time, they too must realize that Allah (ﷻ) has spoken the truth,

Lo! It is you who want to adore them [folks of remnant scripture], but they will not adore you, although you hold fast to all scripture. And when they meet you, they assert, "We believe [as you believe];" but when they find themselves secluded from you, they gnaw their fingers in a hysteria against you (3:119).

The Muslims are bound to be subjected to these types of harangues for as long as West-friendly officials occupy the *masjids* on behalf of their superiors in Tel Aviv and Washington. Most Muslims have not recovered from their hypnotic rituals and customary habits in which they took refuge as the political power of Islam declined. The world of *kufr* and tyranny is subtle, while the Muslims and other oppressed peoples act as if they have alligator skin. The trillions of dollars the Saudi sycophants have deposited to keep the failing American economy afloat is not enough to inhibit their beneficiaries' ancient hatreds, or their wild allegations. The age-old tolerance of the Muslims toward Ahl al-Kitāb will not make them treat Muslims in a fair manner. The Saudis' feelings of inferiority and their appeasement of powerful Jews and Christians are responsible for the abject conditions that have befallen almost two billion Muslims. These Saudis have spent generations ignoring precisely these types of *āyāt* in the Book, and taking leave of their meanings to establish direct cordial ties with an imperial Washington, and indirect ties with a Zionist Israel. In the process, they have demeaned Makkah and Madinah to such an extent that a *mushrik* military presence now surrounds the people of Muhammad (ﷺ) in the land of his birth and struggle.

And now that the *mushriks* and tyrants have accomplished this physical occupation, they want to invade Islamic educational systems and close Muslim schools (*madrāsahs*); they want to change our curricula to omit the parts of our history that tell us about our experiences with Ahl al-Kitāb. This is being done with the acquiescence of the usurpers of Makkah and Madinah, the Saudi royals themselves, dragging with them virtually the rest of the Muslim world. And would this be possible without the timorous quietism of ‘alims who are supposed to affiliate with Allah (ﷻ), His Prophet (ﷺ), and the Qur’an, but are instead affiliating with the Saudis, and through them with imperial America and the sages of Zionism?

The words in this Book should be enough to guide the Muslims out of the circle of these Jews and Christians, the so-called Ahl al-Kitāb. If nomadic and primitive Arabians could understand what Allah (ﷻ) was saying over 1,400 years ago, surely we now after all this time, experience, and cumulative knowledge, can understand it again. This is the only way that is open to the Muslims of today: this Qur’anic channel to Allah (ﷻ). Nothing else is left, nothing else will do.

But if you are patient in adversity and consciously cautious [of Allah’s power], their guile cannot harm you at all, for verily, Allah encompasses [with His might] all that they do (3:120).

Allah (ﷻ) expects the Muslims to be patient when their enemies are physically stronger than they are. This patience is expressed through whatever means of organized opposition they may decide to express against the aggravated material force of their adversaries. The Muslims are also expected to be patient and to outlive their antagonists’ deceitfulness. The worst-case scenario is when they combine their craftiness with physical force and material power; this is the challenge the Muslims face today. Not only do they have an enemy that has entrenched military bases all over the Muslim world, but they also have an expedient and subtle enemy who is as deadly as his exterior counterpart. This internal enemy is represented by

the pseudo-Muslims who rule without popular consent and who recruit Muslim youth to fight not against Zionism and imperialism but against the broad Islamic movement.

Once again appears the word *tattaqū* (from *taqwá*) which means in part to defend oneself against Allah's (ﷻ) power. There is no question about it. There are two powers that interplay in the life and mind of committed Muslims: the subtle power of Allah (ﷻ) and the crude apparent power of His enemies. Allah (ﷻ) is reminding the Muslims here to factor in His power and to ignore the power of His enemies. Human power of whatever kind should not be of any consequence when it comes to this eventful clash of wills and armies. The Muslims are observant of Allah (ﷻ) in everything else they do, so why should they forget Him when it comes to wars and battles? When all their activities are tied to Allah (ﷻ), coming as they are from hearts that are conscious of Allah (ﷻ) and minds that think about Allah (ﷻ), then they have nothing to fear when they step onto the war front and strike against Allah's (ﷻ) enemies. That is how they should build up their determination and move to the battlefields. This attitude is very much unlike today's meaningless Muslims who buy their military hardware from Allah's (ﷻ) enemies, whom they love, and then use these contraptions to fight against the Islamic movement.

Muslims are not permitted to traffic with the *kāfirs* that come from the ranks of Jews and Christians on matters of ideological orientation and strategic security. The reasons stated above could not be more emphatic,

1. they will not hesitate to inflict maximum harm on the committed Muslims.
2. short of that, they will strive to destabilize and intimidate the Muslims' social and political Islamic order.
3. they will express their animosity and hatred in public statements as well as in the way they approach Muslims, with appealing words the while in their closed circles they divulge their vehemence and ferocity against the Muslims. Besides, they consider the Qur'an and the Prophet (ﷺ) less than legitimate, to put it mildly.

4. still, what they hide in their private selves and closed circles is more intense and more severe than whatever public expressions of displeasure they may show.

What should be qualified here is that there is a flip side to the prevalent attitude of Ahl al-Kitāb. This Qur’anic insight into the political psychology of Ahl al-Kitāb should not be a blanket statement that annuls other Qur’anic *āyāt*, which address the *kitābis’* social psychology rather than their political and ideological offenses. Allah (ﷻ) says concerning this multitude of people who consider themselves scripturalists,

As for such [of the deniers of Allah] as do not fight against you on account of [your] commitment [to Allah], and neither drive you forth from your homelands, Allah does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave toward them with full equity, for verily, Allah loves those who are equitable. Allah only forbids you to turn in friendship toward such as fight against you because of [your] commitment to Allah, and do drive you out of your homelands, or aid [others] in driving you out; and as for those [from among you] who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly offenders of justice (60:8–9).

Muslim leaders have the necessary information to assess which “Christians” and which “Jews” are on amicable terms with the Muslims, and which are belligerent and antagonistic toward an Islamic ideological state and a “faith-based society.” It appears that in Islamic history there were friendly relations between the Muslims who arrived in Iberia and the Jews who were living there; it also appears that relations were cordial between the Christian Copts of Egypt and the Muslims who were trying to acquaint the Egyptian people with Islam. Some of these Jews and Christians rose to prestigious positions within the Islamic State. It is known that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the second successor (*khalīfah*) to the

Prophet (ﷺ), assigned administrative duties to individuals who had previously been officials of the Byzantine State. Other successors to the Prophet (ﷺ) who came after 'Umar did the same. The dynastic 'Abbasid sultans also employed Jews and Christians in government positions, certainly not the executive body of the state but in other lesser field positions. The Ottoman state too appointed Christians as officers and ambassadors.¹⁸⁸

The difficulties of trying to establish a balance in relations with Jews and Christians can be summarized in the following three considerations. First, the Muslims' have a natural internal tendency to admire the deniers of Allah (ﷻ) and truth from among the large and diverse pool of Jewish and Christian scripturalists, while this same pool of people shows no affinity for Muslims; rather they may feel aversion and antipathy toward committed Muslims. Second, the Muslims' recognize all scriptures, including the Torah and the Gospel, and endorse and affirm all Apostles and Prophets, including Moses and Jesus (ﷺ), while the Jews and Christians do not accept the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ). And third, the people of previous scripture typically adopt a duplicitous attitude toward Muslims: in direct encounters they pretend to agree with Muslims, saying that we all worship One God and that Abraham (ﷺ) is our patriarch prophet, while in their private conclaves, they exhibit vehement hatred for the Qur'an and its bearer, Muhammad (ﷺ). This is especially, if not exclusively, so when Muslims are in power, have the upper hand, and are a force to be reckoned with.

There is a salient issue that has to be addressed here, especially in our time and age when everyone is throwing their own book at Islam. With all the facts that Allah (ﷻ) brings to the surface about the terrible convictions and behaviors of some pseudo-scripturalists, the Muslims themselves are counseled not to exchange a macabre and dreadful attitude with one of its kind. In other words if these semi-Christians and Jews are carried away by their political superiors and maintain a grudge against Muslims who have come of political age, we the Muslims are not expected to reciprocate with a nasty attitude or unbecoming behavior. All that is expected from

us, per these *āyāt*, is to be vigilant and to keep our distance from people who mean us no good. A Muslim is required to be good to all people and to be tolerant of “slips” in human nature; but when a fighting and aggressive attitude presents itself it is no longer tolerable by the open-hearted Muslim, and hence he should withdraw his confidence from such social and political troublemakers who fancy themselves as Jews or Christians.

We defend against their malice but we do not reciprocate with malice. We guard against their envy but we show no envy in return. It is only once their malice and envy turn into contentiousness and belligerence that we take up arms and fight the evil that is championed by humans, even if these humans claim they are Jews or Christians. War is permissible when their use of power is meant to deny us power in our own homes, territories, and state. This way we avoid an impending *fitnah* (sedition). When we reach this breaking-point between two social orders we fight a jihad not for ourselves but for Allah (ﷻ). We fight for the general expansion of inter-social understanding and not because we are interested in settling scores. We struggle against all obstacles to normal communication so that Muslims and other people of scripture have the freedom to express their hearts’ convictions and beliefs. This is part of our Islamic responsibility; it is the least we can do for people who would otherwise be barred from access to what Islam really is.

Justice and peace can be shared by everyone when everyone is sincere, forthright, and communicative about the strong beliefs of the heart and its thoughtful expression. No Islamic authority seeks hegemony, imperial domination, or coercive control. The commitment to this level and standard of Islam comes from the pages of this Qur’an, the chapters of history, and the heroism of those Muslims who stood up against internal injustice and external intimidation.

Unfortunately, hundreds of millions of people are prevented from seeing the validity and truth herein because of institutions, establishments, and governments that act as barriers to the simple yet forceful message radiating from the *āyāt* of this Book. These “educational” institutions, military establishments, and autocratic governments should be relieved of their responsibilities by a popu-

lar consensus that comes from Muslims flocking without reservation to the meaning and implications of this Book.

Peoples of the world! This is your Book. The common enemy is the structure of regimes and bureaucracies that offend Allah (ﷻ), by ignoring Him, and thereby violate you by enslaving you. Our reference is the God-given Book that cannot be altered by the powers of self-interest and wealth-hoarding, represented by such governments and establishments. The problem with many of those who style themselves as “Jews” or “Christians,” or even “Muslims,” is that they allow themselves to be swept away by the lucrative advances and gratuities that come their way from the baleful combination of those who have power with those who have wealth. This is the simplest appraisal of the matter.

The Jews and Christians may be able to offer some type of lame excuse because the Torah and Gospel did not survive the onslaught of governments and military aggression throughout history. We Muslims, however, have the advantage of a protected scripture that Allah (ﷻ) has promised to preserve; we are responsible only for understanding and applying it. This is it: Allah’s (ﷻ) final word. We can read it today as it was read a millennium and a half ago — not one vowel, not one diacritic, not one word, not one sound has changed. So what excuse are Muslims going to have when they fail to live up to the standards and to fulfil the obligations that are communicated in this errorless Book?

The “Muslims” themselves are delinquent and blameworthy for not being able to put the Qur’an’s word into their spirit, etch the Qur’an’s *āyāt* into their hearts, translate the Qur’an’s meanings into their actions, and in this way bring the Qur’an to life. Are there not people in this world who can approach the Qur’an with open minds and assume the responsibilities it places on them? We must realize that the message of the Qur’an has been sabotaged by poor translations and the hijacking of the Islamic discourse by Allah’s (ﷻ) enemies who have been working hard at it. Their “sophisticated” approach will not shield the fact that they have been scriptural adversaries for a long time. That is why there are derelict and careless “Muslims” who are convinced they are God’s chosen people just

because they go through the mechanical motions of traditional rituals and customary ceremonies. These are the manacles from which we have to free Allah’s (ﷻ) book, so that it can work on our minds and consciences.

Endnotes

- 1 **Yathrib** – the name of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) city, al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah (Madinah for short), before the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived there.

Najrān – an area, between Yemen and Najd, that was inhabited by Arabian Christians. The map below shows the regions in the Arabian Peninsula at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ).



- 2 **Maryam** (ﷺ) – known as Mary in Christian tradition; and ‘Īsā (ﷺ), known as Jesus.

- 3 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdah wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir, 1411AH), p. 142.
- 4 Narrated by Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī on the authority of Muslim.
 أقرؤوا القرآن : فإنه يأتي يوم القيامة شفيعا لأصحابه . إقرؤوا الزهراوين : البقرة وآل عمران . فإنهما يأتيان يوم
 القيامة كأنهما غمامتان أو غيايتان . أو كأنهما فرقان من طير صواف . يحاجان عن أصحابهما . اقرؤوا سورة البقرة
 : فإن أخذها بركة . وتركها حسرة . ولا تستطيعها البطلة
- 5 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān*, Volume 1. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 374.
- 6 Ibid., p. 362.
- 7 Ibid., p. 362.
- 8 On the authoirty of Abū Dāwūd.
 أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لما أصاب من أهل بدر ما أصاب ورجع إلى المدينة , جمع اليهود في سوق بني
 قينقاع وقال: يا معشر يهود , أسلموا قبل أن يصيبكم الله بما أصاب قريشنا . فقالوا : يا محمد , لا يغرنك من
 نفسك أن قتلت نفرا من قريش كانوا أعمارا لا يعرفون القتال , إنك والله لو قاتلنا لعرفت أننا نحن الناس , وأنك
 لم تلق مثلنا ! فأنزل الله في مثل ذلك من قولهم : (قل للذين كفروا ستغلبون وتحشرون إلى جهنم وبئس المهاد)
 إلى قوله: (العبرة لأولى الأبصار)
- 9 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth,
 and daughters were born unto them,
 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and
 they took them wives of all which they chose.
 And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that
 he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.
 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when
 the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children
 to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown
 (Genesis, 6:1–4; King James Version).
- 10 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that
 loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.
 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John, 4:7–8:
 King James Version).
- 11 **pantheism** – the belief that God and the universe (nature) are ultimately
 identical or that the universe deserves the deepest reverence. Pantheists do

not believe in a God who created the universe. There are three major branches of pantheism: *monist physicalist* or *naturalistic pantheism*, which holds that reality is made up of only physical substance, that is, energy and matter; *monist idealist pantheism*, which holds that the ultimate reality is a single consciousness, made of a mental or spiritual substance; and, *dualist pantheism*, which holds that reality is made up of both physical and mental substance. Famous pantheists include William Wordsworth, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, D.H. Lawrence, Albert Einstein, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Arnold Toynbee.

panentheism – the belief that God is greater than the universe and includes and interpenetrates it. It differs from pantheism, which regards God to be synonymous with the material universe. The term was coined by German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781–1832), who sought to reconcile monotheism and pantheism.

- 12 **St. Anselm of Canterbury** (1033–1109) – theologian and philosopher, born of noble parents in or near Aosta, Italy. He joined the Abbey of Bec (an abbey is a church associated with a monastery or convent), in Normandy, becoming abbot (the superior of an abbey of monks) there in 1078. Appointed Archbishop of Canterbury (1093), he frequently came into conflict over Church rights, first with Williams Rufus, then with Henry I. His resoluteness led to his being exiled by both kings; but in 1107 Anselm's threat of excommunication led to a reconciliation, and a compromise was devised, which was eventually accepted. A follower of St. Augustine, he was the main figure in early scholastic philosophy, remembered especially for his *ontological* proof for the existence of God, and his theory of atonement. He may have been canonized (accorded sacrosanct or authoritative standing) as early as 1163, though most official records indicate that it was 1494. The important thing to remember here is that these theoretical and mental upheavals within the Christian European context were taking place because of Islam's conceptual and practical impact on the world of that time.
- 13 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān, Volume 1*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 369.
- 14 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj, Volume 3*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir, 1411AH), p. 145–146.
- 15 Ibid. (Transmitted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Ishāq, and Ibn al-Mundhir).

- 16 Theories about the causes and origins of AIDS abound, and there are currently massive efforts to find a cure, or at least treatments which would relieve sufferers. Although those at highest risk include homosexual and bisexual men — and so it is sometimes thought of as a disease that affects sexual deviants — it is also spreading among heterosexuals of both sexes, lesbians, intravenous drug users, people who have received infected blood in transfusions, and the children of sufferers.
- 17 **sadism** – named after the **Marquis de Sade** (1740–1814), a French “nobleman” and soldier, who was in prisons and asylums for many years, the bulk of which were for sexual behavior that was considered abhorrent. He also wrote novels describing scenes of sexual cruelty.

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836–1895), a German novelist whose characters took pleasure in receiving pain, lent his name to **masochism**.

- 18 Though not all children who are physically abused during childhood turn out to be sexual sadists (pain-givers) or masochists (pain-receivers), according to some observations sadists and masochists usually seem to have become so early in life.
- 19 **Sigmund Freud** (1865–1939) – Austrian physician who “pioneered” the study of the unconscious mind. He developed the methods of free association and interpretation of dreams that are basic techniques of psychoanalysis, and formulated the concepts of the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. His books include *Die Traumdeutung* (1900, *The Interpretation of Dreams*), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930, *Civilization and its Discontents*).

Freud studied medicine in Vienna and was a member of the research team that discovered the local anesthetic effects of cocaine. From 1885 to 1886 he studied hypnosis in Paris under the French physiologist Charcot and in 1889 under two of Charcot’s opponents. From 1886 to 1938 he had a private practice in Vienna, and his theories and writings drew largely on case studies of his own patients, who were mainly upper middle-class, middle-aged women. He was also influenced by Breuer, a Viennese physician, and his research into hysteria. In the early 1900s a group of psychoanalysts gathered around Freud. Some of these later broke away and formed their own schools: Alfred Adler in 1911 and Carl Jung in 1913. Following the Nazi entrance into Austria in 1938, Freud left for London, where he died.

The word *psychoanalysis* was coined by Freud, and many of his terms have passed into popular usage, not without distortion. Freud discovered how unconscious forces influence people’s thoughts and actions, but his theory of the repression of infantile sexuality as the root of neuroses in the adult (as in the *Oedipus complex*) was controversial; later he also stressed the sig-

nificance of aggressive drives. His work has changed the way people think about human nature and his theories have brought about a more open approach to sexual matters. Antisocial behavior is now understood to result in many cases from unconscious forces, and these new concepts have led to wider expression of the human condition in art and literature. Nevertheless, Freud's theories have caused disagreement among psychologists and psychiatrists, and his methods of psychoanalysis cannot be applied in every case.

- 20 Narrated by Usāmah ibn Zayd on the authority of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nisā'ī and Ibn Mājah.

ما تركت بعدي فتنة أضر على الرجال من النساء

- 21 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik on the authority of Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, al-Nisā'ī, al-Ḥākim, and al-Bayhaqī.

الدنيا متاع , وخير متاعها المرأة الصالحة , إن نظر إليها سرته , وإن أمرها أطاعته , وإن غاب عنها حفظته في نفسها وماله

- 22 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik on the authority of Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, al-Nisā'ī, al-Ḥākim, and al-Bayhaqī.

إنما حبيب إلي من دنياكم النساء والطيب وجعلت قرة عيني في الصلاة

- 23 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik on the authority of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī and Aḥmad ibn Hanbal.

سمعت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يقرأ في الصلاة لو أن لابن آدم واديا من ذهب لا يتغى إليه ثانيا ولو أعطي ثانيا لا يتغى ثالثا ولا يملا جوف ابن آدم إلا التراب ويتوب الله على من تاب

- 24 **The Republic** – a treatise by the Greek philosopher Plato in which the voice of Socrates is used to describe the ideal state, where the cultivation of truth, beauty, and goodness achieves perfection.

Plato (428–327BC) – classical Greek philosopher and mathematician, who partially (along with Aristotle and Socrates) laid the foundations of Western philosophy, logic, rhetoric, and the natural sciences. He founded the Academy of Athens, the first institution of higher learning in the Western world. His works were written in the form of dialogues (35) and letters (13). Socrates, his mentor, figures prominently in most of the early dialogues, known as the *Socratic dialogues*; however the precise relationship between the two remains an ambiguous area among historians.

Socrates (469–399BC) – classical Greek philosopher who is considered to be one of the pillars of Western philosophy. Most of his works survive through the writings of his students, particularly Plato and Xenophon (430–354BC), and a playwright contemporary of his, Aristophanes (446–386BC). From the words in Plato’s dialogues, Socrates is known to have made major contributions to logic, ethics, and epistemology. He is famous for the *Socratic Method*, a type of pedagogy or dialectic method of inquiry in which questions are asked to stimulate insight into the issue or problem at hand. Because he was a social and moral critic of the concentration of power in the state, he often clashed with the Athenian government and its sense of justice; and this may have been the source of his execution. He was found “guilty” of corrupting the minds of the youth and was sentenced to death by drinking the proverbial cup of hemlock.

- 25 In religion, morals, and metaphysics, a diversity of possibilities is on offer, and those who reject an easy relativism must defend and sustain their views as more than arbitrary opinions. In the dialogue several understandings of justice are examined and discarded as inadequate: Cephalus’ (a wealthy Greek non-citizen and elderly arms manufacturer living in Athens who engages in dialogue with Socrates in *Plato’s Republic*) view that justice is telling the truth and paying one’s debts; Polemarchus’ (Athenian philosopher and Cephalus’ son, who was executed) suggestion that justice is giving each one his due; and Thrasymachus’ (a sophist of ancient Greece, best known as a character in *Plato’s Republic*) argument that justice is the interest of the stronger — simply a rhetorical disguise for self-interest. This last view, in progressively modified form, is then taken over by Glaucon (Plato’s older brother and a major conversant with Socrates in *Plato’s Republic*) and Adeimantus (Plato’s eldest brother who figures prominently in *Plato’s Republic*). After this initial clearing of the ground, Socrates is pressed to present his own understanding of justice.
- 26 **Nicomachean Ethics, Book V** – Most notable account of Aristotle’s view of justice, which distinguishes between universal and particular justice.

Aristotle (384–322BC) – iconic Greek philosopher, who is credited with creating a comprehensive system of Western philosophy including aesthetics, morality, science, logic, politics, law, and metaphysics. He studied and wrote on a wide range of subjects including physics, biology, zoology, poetry, theater, music, logic, rhetoric, politics, government, ethics, and metaphysics. He studied with Plato and his most well-known student was Alexander the Great (356–323BC). His scientific conclusions were being verified well into the European Renaissance. Aristotle’s scholarly works are collected in the *Corpus Aristotelicum*.

- 27 **Pontius Pilate** (early 1st century CE) – Roman procurator (bureaucrat) of Judea, 26–36CE. The currently circulating New Testament Gospels describe his reluctant ordering of Jesus' (ﷺ) crucifixion. Pilate was unsympathetic to the Jews; his actions several times provoked riots, and in 36CE he was recalled to Rome to account for the brutal suppression of a Samaritan revolt. The Greek historian Eusebius says he committed suicide after Jesus' (ﷺ) “crucifixion.”
- 28 **Augustine of Hippo** (354–430) – better known as St. Augustine, he is one of the most influential figures in the development of Western Christianity. Born in what is now Algeria, then under Roman occupation, he started off life as a “pagan” intellectual, being influenced by the works of Plato and other Greek philosophers. After converting to Catholicism, he lent his philosophical discipline to frame the concepts of original sin and just war. As one of the most prolific medieval writers, his works include *De Doctrina Christiana* (*On Christian Doctrine*); interpretive works on the Book of Genesis, the Psalms, and Paul's Letter to the Romans; *Retractationes* (*Retractions*), a review of his earlier works written near the end of his life; *Confessiones* (*Confessions*), a personal account of his earlier life; *De civitate dei* (*Of the City of God*), consisting of 22 books — his magnum opus; and *De trinitate* (*On the Trinity*), considered by many Christians to be one of the greatest theological works of all time.
- 29 **St. Thomas Aquinas** – refer to endnote 95 in Volume 3.

Martin Luther (1483–1546) – German priest and theologian, who is credited with starting the Protestant Reformation. He was excommunicated in 1521 for his writings and beliefs, particularly for bypassing the Pope in suggesting that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge. In thesis 86 of his famous 95 *Theses*, he asks, “Why does the Pope, whose wealth today is greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build the basilica of St. Peter with the money of poor believers rather than with his own money?” After excommunication, he was declared a heretic and the order was given that anyone could kill him without legal consequence. He translated the Bible into German (from Latin) making it accessible to the general public, and his method of translation heavily influenced the famous English translation, the King James Version. Condemning vows of celibacy on biblical grounds, he got married, had six children, and set a precedent for all Protestant ministers.

Of his views regarding Jews, he felt they were a rejected people guilty of the murder of Jesus (ﷺ). He considered them not to be the “chosen people” but the “devil's people” because they had rejected and persecuted Christ; he called them blasphemers and liars. Luther advocated setting synagogues on

fire, destroying Jewish prayerbooks, forbidding rabbis from preaching, seizing their property and wealth, and smashing up their homes, so that these “poisonous envenomed worms” would be forced into labor or expelled “for all time,” and to this effect, he wrote two books: *Von den Juden und Ihren Lügen* (*On the Jews and Their Lies*), and *Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi* (*On the Holy Name and the Lineage of Christ*), both published in 1543. Some historians claim that the Nazis opportunistically used these works to rationalize their anti-Jewish policies. As for Islam, he saw the Turkish Muslims as a scourge sent by God to punish Christians, as the apocalyptic soldiers who would ultimately kill the antichrist, whom Luther believed to be the papacy, and the Roman Catholic Church. In 1529, he wrote *On War Against the Turk*, and urged Charles V and the German people to fight a secular war against the Ottomans, who by that time had entered Vienna. He may have been the first one to coin the term *Mohammedanism*, when referring to Islam, and wrote several critical theses on the subject, using the Latin translation of the Qur’an as a reference.

- 30 The words, *Muhammad* and *Aḥmad*, are two superlatives from the same root, *ḥamida* (from al-Naysābūrī in *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, as reported by Dr. al-Zuḥaylī).

Dr. Wahbah al-Zuḥaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1411AH), p. 178.

- 31 Faced with the power of the Roman Empire, and mindful of the advantages that were thought to stem from working within its framework rather than opposing it, these ancient writers tried to show that those who did not worship the Roman gods could nevertheless be good Romans. They argued that the special connection between Roman religion and the Roman State should be broken, and that emperors should allow the practice of other religions, such as Christianity. Some Christian writers claimed falsely that only corrupt emperors had persecuted the Church. Others suggested that the Church and empire might have a common destiny, that is, they began together (Jesus (ﷺ) had been born in the reign of the first emperor, Augustus) and prospered together. They claimed that the peace won by this emperor — the Pax Romana — was given by God to facilitate the spread of Christianity, “the philosophy which goes with the Empire.”

But there were those who were less optimistic, and followed the apocalyptic tradition of the Revelation of John, who believed that the whole fabric of social and public life was contaminated and corrupted by idolatry. It was unthinkable that a Christian should enter the imperial service, let alone be an emperor. North African Christians — who later became Muslims — displayed a more scornful and defiant attitude to Roman power. In 180CE,

one of the North African martyrs declared, “I do not recognize the empire of this world.” This is centuries ahead of today’s “Christians,” who dare not speak out against today’s worldly empire; indeed in general they do not even think of it.

During the first half of the third century CE, it became fashionable to combine the worship of different gods in one religion. Some of the emperors showed a particular interest in Christianity. The emperor Alexander Severus reputedly included a representation (an idol) of Jesus (ﷺ) among the statues in his chapel. Christianity first became the religion of kings and princes outside the Roman Empire. Royal families adopted it in Edessa — an ancient city in northern Mesopotamia, and one of the chief centers of Syriac-speaking Christianity — early in the third century CE, and in Armenia and Georgia a century later.

- 32 **renaissance** – from the French for *rebirth*, referring to the revival of classical literature and artistic styles at various times in European history. Such renaissances occurred in the 8th–9th centuries, and in the 12th century, and the 14th–16th centuries. The first, or Carolingian Renaissance, centered upon the recovery of classical Latin texts in cathedral schools; the second, or Twelfth-Century Renaissance, was marked by the foundation of universities and the rediscovery of Aristotle’s ethical and philosophical works; and the third (usually called *the Renaissance*) was known for its development of naturalistic works of art, the study of ancient Greek authors, above all Plato, and the critical study of “Christian” texts. All these three renaissances occurred during the ebb and flow of Islamic civilization. Although varied in content and institutional focus, all three therefore included elements of revived classicism. Yet it was the third such revival between 1300CE and 1600CE that historians since Michelet and Burckhardt in the mid-19th century have thought marked the beginnings of modern times. Since they wrote, however, a number of criticisms have been leveled against their interpretations. One is that the two earlier renaissances diminish the supposed unique importance of the third. A second is that few major scientific and technological discoveries, which are crucial to modern societies, were made during the third renaissance. A third is that mass movements — another hallmark of “modernity” — were almost totally absent from the third renaissance, which was a distinctly elite affair. A final objection is that Burckhardt’s renaissance was almost entirely limited to northern Italy.

These caveats have some validity, but they do not wholly negate Burckhardt’s hypothesis. He did not deny the existence of previous classical revivals, but emphasized that classicism was just one element in the renaissance he described. At any rate, causal connections and continuities between the earlier and later renaissances have not been demonstrated. Further, Burckhardt did not claim that all forms of modernity were included

in his renaissance. Nor did he say that northern Italy was typical of all Europe; rather, the suggestion was, Italy was the starting point for changes that eventually affected much of Europe.

Recent scholarship tends to confirm certain elements of the Burckhardtian theory. Chief among them is the rise of *secular/kāfir* nation-states and values. These changes include new institutions such as permanent embassies and spies, standing armies, and regular taxation. The Renaissance was also the genesis of new attitudes. In 1313, Marsilius of Padua (1275–1342) a political theorist and philosopher, born in Padua, Italy, became rector of the University of Paris. His thesis, *Defensor pacis* (1342, *Defender of the Peace*) argued against the temporal/worldly power of clergy and pope, leading to his exile and excommunication. In response, Marsilius rejected all clerical authority. In the 15th century, “civic humanists” made service to the city-state a moral imperative; and in the early 16th century, Machiavelli stated that power should be pursued without reference to Christian commandments. In philosophy, Ficino and Pico della Mirandola suggested that human perfection was possible through the intellectual study of pagan sources, as well as Christian ones, and through Platonic love. Artistic production, although its subjects often remained religious, also acknowledged secular “values,” as in the geometric naturalism of Piero della Francesca’s paintings.

The changes brought about by the Italian Renaissance of the 14th–16th centuries CE should not be compared with modern political and social transformations. However what did take place was a fundamental shift in values and institutions, the effects of which were not confined to Europe’s nominally Christian elites.

- 33 **The Enlightenment** – a European philosophical movement of the 18th century CE, rooted in the 17th century Scientific Revolution and the ideas of Locke and Newton. Its basic belief was the superiority of reason as a guide to all knowledge and human concerns; from this flowed the idea of progress and a challenging of traditional Christianity.
- 34 **agnosticism** – strictly, the view that God’s existence can neither be known (theism) nor denied (atheism). The term was derived from the *unknown* God in Acts 17:23, and first used in 1869 by Thomas Henry Huxley, who contrasted *agnostics* with *gnostics*, or metaphysicians. It was later extended to include the view that knowledge must be restricted to what is available to the senses, and that anything not so available (including therefore religion and God) is irrelevant to life today.
- 35 **humanism** – historically, a movement that was born in the Italian Renaissance, through the writings of Picino, Pico, and later Erasmus and

More. The humanists drew on classical literature (particularly that of Greece) and emphasized the centrality of human achievements and potential, in opposition to many of the claims of dogmatic theology and science.

36 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidahi wa al-Shari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āšir, 1411AH), p. 192.

37 Ibid., p. 193.

38 Archaeological theorizing of inequality has been accompanied by methodological innovations in studying relational power over time. Social theorists Max Weber (1864–1920) and Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) influenced social conceptualization of bureaucratic power in state societies and the perpetuation of institutional authority. Some studies of social movements and state-making, and of national policy, have further conceptualized institutional power and the rituals of its replication. Some social scientists have studied cross-culturally the different systems through which power is legitimized, enforced, and contested.

Max Weber (1864–1920) – economist and sociologist, born in Erfurt, Germany. He studied at Heidelberg and Berlin universities, and held government posts at Berlin (1893), Freiburg (1894), Heidelberg (1897), and Munich (1919). His best known work, a major influence on sociological theory, is *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1904). He helped to draft the constitution for the Weimar Republic (1919).



Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) – sociologist, born in Epinal, France. He studied at Paris, and became a teacher, then taught at the University of Bordeaux (1887), and at the Sorbonne. His writings include *Les Regles de la methode sociologique* (*The Rules of Sociological Method*, 1894) and a definitive study of suicide (1897). He is perhaps best known for his concept of *collective representations*, the social power of ideas stemming from their development through the interaction of many minds. In the West, he is generally regarded as one of the founders of sociology.



39 This kind of structural analysis can be seen, for example, in social studies of the power of transnational corporations. Class analysis has been used by

some social scientists to study inequality in many social contexts, not all of them industrialized. Other social scientists have argued that class analysis has its limits, especially where exploitation is multidirectional, and have been drawn to reformulations of historical materialism. Along these lines power is regarded as generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination across time and space, whether those structures of domination rely on the allocation of material resources (as emphasized by Marx) or on information and surveillance, for example.

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) – US sociologist whose concern for humanity, ethical values, and individual freedom led him to criticize the US establishment. Originally in the liberal tradition, Mills later adopted Weberian and even Marxist ideas. He aroused considerable popular interest in sociology with such works as *White Collar* (1951); *The Power Elite* (1956), depicting the US as ruled by businessmen, military experts, and politicians; and *Listen, Yankee* (1960).



40 **hegemony** – the concept of totalizing power in which the state and/or a popular majority dominate society through virtually every means. It provides social scientists, who are of course away from these guiding words of the Qur'an, with a way to think about pervasive institutionalized power. Studies have been undertaken to critically reconstruct colonial historiography and to recognize the powerful ways in which colonial subjects had been left without a voice in strategic discussions of their identity, resources, and future. In the 1960s and 70s, as social scientists in the US and in France rethought the political role of intellectuals in reaction to their nations' protracted war in Vietnam, the concept of hegemony became a way to think about how the state did indeed have agency, through a militarized institutional apparatus, to repress — ideologically, socially, and physically — those citizens who held counter-views about a state's actions. There was also a time when certain theories of resistance took their cue from political movements.

41 **United Nations** – refer to endnote 133 in Volume 1.

World Bank – refer to endnote 114 in Volume 2.

International Criminal Court (ICC) – founded in the Hague in the Netherlands on July 1, 2002, it is a permanent tribunal to try, charge, and prosecute individuals for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. 111 member countries have ratified its charter; however, the major economic and military powers including China, Russia, India, and the United States

are conspicuous because they have not ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC. After signing but not ratifying the statute, the United States, Israel, and Sudan “unsigned” the Rome Statute, indicating they no longer intend to become a party to the statute and, as such, they have no legal obligations arising from their signature of the statute. So far the court



has opened five investigations in Northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Darfur (Sudan), and the Republic of Kenya. But it has not seen fit to indict chief executives in the United States for obvious war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; and in Israel for genocidal policies in the occupied Holy Land.

World Trade Organization (WTO) – established in 1995, it replaced the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and was designed by its founders to supervise and “liberalize” international trade between participating countries. With a current membership of 153 countries and 30 observers, all of whom have applied for membership, the WTO claims to represent and regulate 97% of world trade. Policies



and regulations are normally developed through rounds of negotiations; the current round of negotiations were launched in 2001 in Doha, Qatar (the Doha Round). The agenda of the Doha Round was to make globalization accessible to all the world’s countries, especially the poorest ones, particularly by getting rid of local farming subsidies and removing barriers to trade. Highly contentious since its inception, the Doha Round will not be concluded in the near future.

Critics say that the WTO is fundamentally undemocratic and lacks transparency, and that its rules are written by and for corporations with inside access to the negotiations; and because of this posture, citizen input by consumer, environmental, human rights, and labor organizations is consistently ignored. WTO regulations favor multinational corporate interests to human and labor rights; for instance, the WTO has ruled that it is illegal for a government to ban a product based on the way it is produced, such as with child labor, and the WTO also does not proscribe companies from doing business with dictatorial regimes who are known to be human rights violators. Because the power countries who dominate policy development in the WTO are generally capitalist, what is meant by “liberalizing” international trade is the privatization and deregulation of essential public services such as education, health care, energy, and water. Privatization will allow a few foreign multinationals, either from the Gulf, Europe, or the United States, to dominate the distribution of energy and water the world over.

Given that such corporations are driven by the profit motive, rather than social justice and the public good, this will mean a dramatic rise in prices, putting the poorest countries and the mass of dark-skinned people at the greatest risk. Free trade under the rubric of globalization is not working for the majority of the world, especially the poor parts in Africa, Central America, and Southern and Central Asia. The UN Development Program reports that the world's wealthiest 20% consumes 86% of the earth's resources while the poorest 80% consumes just 14%. WTO policies have exacerbated this polarization by using one of its sister institutions, the IMF, to force the introduction of foreign capital into Third World economies, privatize them, and thereby make it easier for production to go where the labor is cheapest and most easily exploited. Because of its one-sided policies to favor the wealthy, opposition to the WTO has been steadily increasing; its meetings are regularly protested, to such an extent that its Seattle meeting in 1999 was not allowed to take place at all. For more information on why principled people are opposing the WTO, refer to the following web page, <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/wto/OpposeWTO.html>

- 42 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Shari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir, 1411AH), p. 198.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 **Camp David Accords (1978)** – refer to endnote 76 in Volume 1 and endnotes 147–148 in Volume 3.

Menachem Wolfovitch Begin (1913–1992) – Zionist politician; prime minister of Israel, 1977–1983. Born in Brest-Litovsk (then in Poland, later in Russia), Begin obtained a law degree at the University of Warsaw. At age 16 he joined the youth organization of the Revisionist Zionists Betar. More extremist than Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, the founder of the revisionist movement, Begin challenged him in 1938 after being appointed commander of Betar in Poland. On the eve of the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, Begin fled to Vilnius, Lithuania, then under Soviet occupation. In 1940 he was sentenced to eight years hard labor in a Siberian camp. But after the Soviet Union had joined the Second World War in mid-1941, Begin was released and drafted into the Free Polish army. He arrived in Palestine in 1942 as a soldier of that force.



After the army's demobilization in 1943, he was appointed commander of the underground Irgun Zvai Leumi (National Military Organization). Begin declared an armed struggle against the mandate power in Palestine in January 1944 (the British), a call he repeated in October 1945 after the end of the world war. The Irgun's terrorist activities led the British to offer a £10,000 sterling reward for his arrest. In July 1946 the Irgun bombed the British mandate government offices in the King David Hotel, Jerusalem, killing 91 British, Arab, and Jewish officials and staff. Following this, the Haganah, the main military force of the Jewish community in Palestine, stopped cooperating with the Irgun.

Begin was one of the chief planners of the attack on the Arab village of Deir Yasin near Jerusalem, on April 10, 1948, resulting in the massacre of 254 men, women, and children — an event that caused the intended massive exodus of Arabs from the Holy Land. Led by Begin, the Irgun ranks refused to be absorbed into the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) formed by the provisional government of David Ben-Gurion on May 26, 1948. They participated in the war against the Arabian states as a separate entity. This continued until late-June when Ben-Gurion, clashing with Begin, disbanded the Irgun. Soon, however, former Irgun ranks and Revisionist Zionists reemerged as the Herut Party under Begin's leadership.

In 1949 Begin was elected to the Knesset and remained a member until 1984. In the first five general elections, his Herut Party won about 12% of the vote, emerging in an authoritarian way as the largest opposition faction, and brooked no challenge. In 1965, at his behest, Herut joined with the Liberal Party to form the Gahal Bloc, which won 21% of the seats in that year's general election. On the eve of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Begin joined the national unity government headed by Levi Eshkol. He stayed in the cabinet until July 1970 when, protesting against the majority decision to accept a US peace plan that envisaged "Israel's" withdrawal from Sinai, he resigned, and resumed his opposition role. In 1973 when the Likud Bloc, containing all the right-wing parties, was formed, Begin was elected its leader. Following Likud's electoral success in May 1977, Begin became prime minister, a position he held for more than six years. He signed the Camp David Accords with Egyptian President Muḥammad Anwar al-Sādāt in September 1978, which in turn led to the conclusion of a "peace treaty" between Egypt and Israel. That year Begin and Sādāt won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Begin twice ordered the invasion and occupation of Lebanon: in March 1978 and June 1982. The first occupation, limited to southern Lebanon, ended shortly. But the second invasion, when the Israelis advanced as far as Beirut and began to dictate the politics of Lebanon, proved to last for nearly two decades, until Hizbullah finally expelled the occupiers in 2001. Growing public criticism and the Jewish death toll in Lebanon, combined with 400% annual inflation, led to Begin's resignation as the prime minister

in August 1983. He had also been depressed by the death of his wife, Aliza, nine months earlier.

Muḥammad Anwar al-Sādāt (1918–1981) – Egyptian military officer and politician; president of Egypt, 1970–1981; prime minister, 1973–1974, 1980–1981. Son of a petty civil servant in Mīt Abū al-Kūm village in the Nile delta, Sādāt grew up in Cairo. He graduated from the Cairo Military Academy in 1938. Found guilty of spying for the Germans, Sādāt, a captain in the signals corps, was jailed in the summer of 1942. He escaped in 1944 and went underground until the detention order was lifted. He spent two years in jail (1946–1948) as a suspect in the assassination of Aḥmad ‘Uthmān, a cabinet minister, but was acquitted.



After his intelligence ventures failed he rejoined the army in late 1949, regaining his rank of captain. He was posted to Rafaḥ in the Sinai, where he came into contact with Jamāl ‘Abd al-Nāṣir. Sādāt participated in the July 22nd coup mounted by the Free Officers Organization, and secured a seat on the ruling 18-member Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). He liaised with al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn, with which he was said to have had “connections.” Sādāt edited *al-Jumhūrīyah* (*The Republic*), the regime’s mouthpiece. From 1959–1969 he served as speaker of the parliament; and from 1964–1966 he was one of its four vice-presidents.

When in 1965 Egypt established the “Islamic Congress” in Cairo to rally Muslim opinion abroad behind it, Sādāt was chosen as its secretary-general. He was Egypt’s representative in international “Islamic” gatherings, including a summit that led to the formation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in September 1969. Three months later ‘Abd al-Nāṣir, performing a rightward shift, appointed Sādāt as sole vice-president. On Nāṣir’s death in September 1970, Sādāt became acting president. In mid-October he was “elected” president in a referendum, being the sole candidate!

Sādāt’s power struggle with ‘Alī Ṣabrī ended in May 1971 when he arrested Ṣabrī and his close aides. In September Sādāt promulgated a new constitution that played down the socialist guidelines of the earlier document. In mid-1973 he purged the leadership of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) of leftists. Sādāt signed a 15-year Egyptian-Soviet “Friendship Treaty” in late May 1971. But in July 1972 he demanded that all Soviet military advisers in Egypt, who had arrived after the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, leave the country within 10 days. Some 15,000 Soviet personnel left, taking with them fighter aircraft, interceptors, and surface-to-air missiles. However some of them gradually returned after October 1972 and again after February 1973. Following Sādāt’s rapprochement with Moscow in March 1973, Soviet arms shipments resumed.

Sādāt began to plan an invasion of the Israeli-occupied Arab territories, or more accurately an invasion was planned for him. During the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War the Egyptian troops performed unprecedentedly well, capturing land in the Sinai from the Israelis and retaining it. This enhanced Sādāt's standing at home and in the region. But instead of pursuing peace under the auspices of the United Nations he opted for US mediation in his talks with Israel, thus breaking Arab ranks. After two interim disengagement agreements with Zionist Israel (Sinai I and Sinai II, in 1974 and 1975) the "peace process" stalled.

Sādāt's economic liberalization, involving the removal or reduction of subsidies on essentials, triggered countrywide bread riots in January 1977, the most serious upheaval since the anti-British rioting 25 years earlier. It ceased only when Sādāt rescinded the price increases. He appealed for aid to the United States which responded positively. After Moscow had refused to reschedule the Egyptian debts of US \$10–12 billion, Sādāt unilaterally abrogated the Soviet Friendship Treaty.

In November 1977, in a dramatic move he addressed the Israeli Knesset in al-Quds (Jerusalem), and this made him something of a hero in the Western world, a factor that paved the way for the commercial success of his autobiography, *In Search of Identity* (1978). After organizing this favorable turn of events, Washington began to provide military aid to Egypt. Continuing on the script, Sādāt signed the Camp David Accords with then Zionist premier Menachem Begin in a White House ceremony on September 18, 1978 in the presence of US president Jimmy Carter.



At home, fearing a military coup, Sādāt dismissed his chief of staff and defense minister, General 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Jamāsī, and appointed National Democratic Party (NDP) leader Mustafá Khalīl as prime minister to lead a "peace government" of technocrats and academics.

In March 1979 Sādāt and Begin signed the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli "Peace Treaty" at the White House. This resulted in the immediate suspension of Egypt from the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the severing of links with all League members, except for Oman. To overcome the increasing isolation of Egypt, Sādāt assumed more autocratic power at home. He dissolved parliament two years short of its normal tenure, and rigged the first multiparty election in June 1979, his NDP securing 83% of the seats. He expelled the last of the remaining 200 Soviet civilian experts. Egypt became more dependent on the United States for economic survival.

After securing Khalīl's resignation in May 1980, Sādāt appointed himself prime minister. By immediately holding a stage-managed referendum he abrogated the constitutional provision that limited the presidency to one six-year term. Sādāt's "peace treaty" with Zionist Israel, and the rising corruption and ostentatiousness of the new rich became a direct affront to the Islamic movement in Egypt, whom he had courted in the early years of his regime. The dismantling of the pricing mechanism introduced by the Nāṣir regime fueled inflation and brought much hardship to the working and lower middle classes.

Contemptuous of opposition, both Islamic and secular, Sādāt banned strikes and demonstrations and became increasingly intolerant and dictatorial, indulging his fancy of imperial grandeur. His extended crackdown on dissidents in September 1981 resulted in thousands of arrests. In the following month, he was relieved of his treachery by a hail of bullets from committed Muslims during a military parade on the anniversary of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War. In contrast to the disorientation in the masses caused by the death of 'Abd al-Nāṣir, most Arabs and Muslims felt relieved by Sādāt's well-timed assassination.

Jimmy Carter (1924–present) – popular name of James Earl Carter, US statesman and 39th president (1977–1981); born in Plains, Georgia. He trained at the US Naval Academy, and served in the US Navy until 1953, when he took over the family peanut business and other enterprises. As governor of Georgia (1970–1974) he expressed an informed policy toward the rights of African-Americans. In 1976 he won the Democratic presidential nomination, and went on to win a narrow victory over Gerald Ford for the presidency of the United States. He arranged the "peace treaty" between Sādāt and Begin (1979), and was, according to reports, concerned with human rights at home and abroad. His administration ended in difficulties over the taking of US captives in Islamic Iran, and the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan; he was defeated by Ronald Reagan in the 1980 US presidential election.



46 **Muhammad Ali Jinnah** (1876–1948) – founder of Pakistan, often referred to as *Qā'id-e-A'zam*. Jinnah's ancestors were Hindu Rajput who became Muslims. The eldest of seven children, he was born in the Sind province of what is now Pakistan. His family members were originally from Gujrat, India and thus it is not surprising that they were Ismā'īlī Khojas. Later on in 1901, Jinnah converted to the Ja'fārī Shī'ī school of thought.



Publicly, Jinnah had a non-sectarian stance given that he tried his best to gather the Muslims of India under a united Muslim front, and not under a divisive sectarian identity. In 1970, a legal challenge produced a court decision that stated Jinnah’s secularism made him neither Shī’ī nor Sunnī, and in 1984 the court maintained that he was definitely not Shī’ī.

During his short tenure in England (1892–1896), he showed his early brilliance by becoming the youngest Indian to be called to the bar at age 19. He also became acquainted with liberal Western ideas about democratic self-governance and the modern nation-state; in his characteristic eloquence he began to openly condemn British arrogance and discrimination in occupied India. In his personal life, he also picked up British social customs, with a particular fondness for Western clothing.

On his return to India in 1896, he soon became an influential and sought-after lawyer; and also joined the Indian National Congress, which did not favor outright independence from England, considering British influence on education, law, and industry as essential to Indian public life. During WWI, Jinnah supported the British war effort thinking that India would be compensated with some political freedoms. Jinnah joined the All India Muslim League in 1913 and became its president in 1916; he remained its president until the creation of Pakistan in 1947. At this point, he started demanding “home rule” (not independence) for India as a whole, similar to the status of Canada and Australia. During the first 10 years of his leadership of the Muslim League, he worked for an independent united India (both Hindus and Muslims as citizens of one nation-state), because he viewed a Hindu-Muslim rapprochement as essential to Indian freedom as a nation. He also worked to unite the disparate ranks of Muslims in India, so that together they could work for the independence of India from British colonial rule. In 1920, Jinnah resigned from the Indian National Congress, then headed by Mohandas Gandhi, with a warning that Gandhi’s method of mass struggle would lead to cleavages between Hindus and Muslims on the one hand, and within both political constituencies on the other.

Frustrated by his failing efforts to have a united India with semi-autonomous Muslim and Hindu political constituencies, Jinnah decided to leave everything and move back to the UK permanently in 1931. He was persuaded to return to India by the famous poet Muhammad Iqbal and the Agha Khan, and reorganize the Muslim League to push for a separate Muslim state. He was assisted in this task by Liaquat Ali Khan, who later became the leader of Pakistan after Jinnah passed away. Jinnah was still ready to form an alliance with the Indian National Congress on the conditions that the Congress would be ready to share power, endorse separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, and accept the Muslim League as the representative of the Muslims. Given that the Congress already had its own Muslim representatives, it rejected the last two demands. This is when

Jinnah came to believe in distinct nation-states for Muslims and Hindus because he felt that their unique identities made their differences insurmountable. He further felt that a united India would not be able to honor the rights of Muslims, leading to their political and national marginalization, and ultimately to civil war between Muslims and Hindus. In order to promote the League's views, Jinnah founded the *Dawn* newspaper in 1941. The Pakistan Resolution was adopted in Lahore in 1940 as the main objective of the Muslim League. This led to the formation of East and West Pakistan in 1947.

- 47 **'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān Āl Sa'ūd** (1876–1953) – commonly referred to as Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, he was the founder of what is now the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He was born in Riyadh, now the capital of Saudi Arabia, and then the center of the area called Najd. All of the current and former monarchs of the country are his sons.



After entering into the Treaty of Darin in 1915, which made the lands of Āl Saud into a British protectorate, Ibn Saud began to receive £5,000 sterling every month in addition to a steady supply of weapons and war materiel. In return, he was to attack Ibn Rashīd, an ally ruling over the Peninsula for the Ottomans, who were at war with the British and other European powers. Aided by British arms, money, and intelligence, he took over by force the Najd (1922), and then the Ḥijāz (where Makkah and Madinah are located) three years later, forging this and other neighboring areas into the nation-state of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

Oil was discovered in the country in 1938, and Ibn Saud granted substantial authority and drilling rights to American oil companies, chiefly Standard Oil of California and the Texas Oil Company.

- 48 **Khālīd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Sa'ūd** (1912–1982) – king of Saudi Arabia, 1975–1982; succeeded to the throne after the assassination of his brother, King Fayṣal. Not very much interested in ruling per se, he ceded most of the responsibilities of state to his half-brother, Crown Prince Fahd, who after Khālīd's death became the ruling monarch. When al-Masjid al-Ḥarām was occupied in 1979 by rivals (led by Juhayman al-'Utaybī who charged that the Saudi family had lost legitimacy because of their corruption and Westernization) to the Saudi family hegemony over the Peninsula and the holy cities, he allowed French (some say German) and Pakistani soldiers to enter the sanctuary and kill off somewhere between 1,300–1,500 dissidents. The first of 60 F-15 fighter aircraft arrived in 1982 per an agreement he concluded with then US president Jimmy Carter, for the ostensible purpose of preventing the spread of communism in the Gulf.

Ronald Wilson Reagan (1911–2004) – 40th president of the United States, 1981–1989, and governor of California, 1967–1975. He started work as a largely unnoticed actor in Hollywood, becoming politically active as president of the Screen Actors Guild and through his travels as spokesman for General Electric. As president, by initiating a massive arms build-up against the USSR in his first term, he was famous for dealing the final death blow to communism and the Soviet Union, and ensuring the global ascendancy of capitalism. To this end he is famous for the so-called *trickle-down economics* or “Reaganomics,” in which tax-cuts on the highest tax brackets and deregulation of industry are used to spur economic growth and reduce inflation. Blaming Libya for the bombing of a German nightclub frequented by US soldiers, he bombed the country, killing the youngest of Mu‘ammar al-Qadhafi’s daughters. The end of his presidency was marked by criminal investigations into the Iran-Contra Affair.



Contra – a Central American right-wing guerilla force attempting to overthrow the democratically elected Nicaraguan Sandanista Government (1979–1990). Many of them were mercenaries or former members of the deposed, US-backed dictator Somoza’s personal guard. They operated mainly from bases outside Nicaragua, mostly in Honduras, with covert US funding, as revealed by the “Irangate” hearings, 1986–1987. In 1989, US president George H.W. Bush (the father) announced an agreement with Congress to provide \$41 million in “nonlethal” aid to the Contras until February 1990. The Sandanista government was defeated by the National Opposition Union, a US-backed coalition, in the February 1990 elections. The Contras were disbanded in the same year but, fearing reprisals, a few hundred formed the Re-Contra (officially the 380 Legion) in February 1991.

William Joseph Casey (1913–1987) – director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 1981–1987, during the Reagan administration. Hours before he was to testify in front of Congress regarding his knowledge of and involvement in the Iran-Contra Affair, he died of brain cancer at the age of 74. During WWII, he worked for the Organization of Strategic Services (OSS), which later became the CIA, and later became the head of its Secret Intelligence Branch in Europe. He is one of the key figures who helped to secure an official mandate for the CIA, and shaped US intelligence operations abroad, chiefly with the CIA.

Bandar ibn Sulṭān ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Sa‘ūd (1949–present) – commonly referred to as Bandar bin Sultan; notorious Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States, 1983–2005. Because of his closeness to the Bush family, he

was facetiously called “Bandar Bush.” In the royal family of Saudi Arabia, he is considered to be a bit of an outsider because his mother was a black African servant of his father, Sulṭān ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.



His ultimate appointment to be the Saudi Ambassador in Washington was facilitated by his brokering of the aforementioned sale of 60 F-15s to Saudi Arabia during King Khālid’s reign. He was the key Saudi negotiator of the now infamous al-Yamāmah arms deal worth approximately £43 billion (\$80 billion), including the sale of over 100 war planes, between the UK and Saudi Arabia. After the arms deal was concluded, British Aerospace (BAE Systems) funneled over £1 billion (close to \$2 billion), in \$240 million annual increments over at least 10 years, into two Saudi embassy accounts in the US. Some of this money was used to pay for Bandar’s personal jet, an Airbus A340; when Bandar resigned his ambassador position in the US, his mansion and 95-acre estate in Aspen, Colorado went up for sale at \$135 million. The payments into Bandar’s accounts were “discovered” during an official Serious Fraud Office investigation in the UK. Prime Minister Tony Blair abruptly terminated the investigation in December 2006 through the auspices of then UK attorney general, Lord Goldsmith.

After he left his ambassadorship in the US in 2005, he was appointed to be the secretary-general of the Saudi National Security Council, that is, the head of their intelligence services. In this capacity, in 2007, he shuttled arms to the Faṭḥ al-Islām sectarian militants who besieged the Palestinian Nahr al-Bārid refugee camp in northern Lebanon, in order to diminish the growing power and influence of Hizbullah. He has not been seen in public since the end of 2008; it is said that he is either under house arrest or in prison after a failed coup attempt against King ‘Abdullāh.

- 49 **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** – common name of the Cooperation Council for the Arabian States of the Gulf, it is a political and economic union of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Established in 1981, its main objective was to isolate Islamic Iran politically, economically, and militarily. To this end, they together sought to develop The Peninsula Shield, a unified military presence of Gulf Arabian states, and to establish a common currency by 2010. The UAE announced its withdrawal from the monetary union project in 2009 because it was announced that the central bank for the economic union would be located in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and not in the UAE.
- 50 **Carter Doctrine** – an assertion in 1980 by President Carter of the United States of vital US interest in the Persian Gulf region (prompted by the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan): any

attempt at control by a power other than the US, even if it were an act of Islamic self determination in the area, would be met by US and Western military force if necessary.

- 51 Harry Magdoff, John Bellamy Foster, Robert W. McChesney, Paul Sweezy (editors), “U.S. Military Bases and Empire,” *Monthly Review Magazine* 53(10) (March 2002).
<http://monthlyreview.org/0302editr.htm>
- 52 **Operation Desert Storm** – code name of the military action to eject the Iraqi army from Kuwait in 1991. The buildup phase was code-named Operation Desert Shield and lasted from August 1990, when Kuwait was first invaded by Iraq, to January 1991 when Operation Desert Storm was unleashed, starting the Second Gulf War. Desert Storm ended with the military defeat of the Iraqi regime in the Kuwaiti theater of operations, late February 1991. The cost of the operation was \$53 billion. Guess where most of the money came from?
- 53 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān, Volume 1*. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 386.
- 54 **Agha Khan Ismā‘īlīs** – emerged in the aftermath of the disintegration of the Ismā‘īlīs in Persia; many of them left for India, and as such it is said that their beliefs were impacted by ancient Indian ideas. In the 19th century a person in Iran by the name of Ḥasan ‘Alī Shah managed to attract a number of people as his “unlawful” conduct gained him notoriety throughout Persia. Many Iranians, it is said, were impressed by him. Ḥasan ‘Alī Shah concealed his denomination. At that time the British used him for their own purposes. When he failed to carry the British political ambitions further by staging a revolt, he was captured and imprisoned. The British managed to intercede on his behalf and exiled him to Afghanistan. Nothing much came of him there, so he was moved to Bombay, India (now Mumbai) where he became the head of the Ismā‘īlī minority there. The British gave him the title *Agha Khan*. After he died in 1881, his son took over and was given the title of *Agha Khan II*. Part of his preparation for this leadership position consisted of learning several languages — but not Arabic; he was a poet in three languages: Persian, Urdu, and Gujrati. Agha Khan II encouraged education among his followers in particular and among the Muslims in general, gaining him a reputation among many Muslims in India. He married an Iranian princess by the name of Bibi Khan. The marriage begot Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Shah or *Agha Khan III*.
Agha Khan III was born in Karachi in 1877. He became an “Imam” at the young age of eight when his father died in 1885. His mother helped run

the affairs of the sect until he turned 16. He, by and large, adopted the tenets of Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Buzurg which were inordinate. In 1948 he gave his followers in Africa something like a constitution, which divided them into three jurisdictions: Dar al-Salam, Nairobi, and Kampala. The Ismā'īlī Agha Khan followers living in Zanzibar, Madagascar, the Congo, and Zaire would belong to the Dar al-Salam jurisdiction. He chose Karachi, Pakistan to be the seat of Agha Khan Ismā'īlīs, also called *Nizārits*, throughout the world.

For an “Imam” of an “Islamic” denomination there were some unsettling things about him. He is said to have been involved in gambling and was also reported to have indulged the cravings of the flesh. His wives were selected for their beauty only, without much consideration to other Islamic principles and values expected in an “Imam’s” wife.

Druze – are members of a movement called *Darazīyah*, derived from Muḥammad al-Darazī (died, 1019CE), an Ismā'īlī missionary from Bukhara, Uzbekistan, who became an adviser to the Fāṭimī “Caliph” al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh (ruled from 996–1021CE) in Cairo in 1017. Accepting the Ismā'īlī doctrine, al-Darazī regarded the *ta'wīl* (the inferred meaning) and its representative, the Imam, superior to the *tanẓīl* (expressed meaning) and its representative, Muhammad (ﷺ), and attributed the living Imam (al-Ḥākim) with supernatural powers, embodying *al-'aql al-kullī* (the universal intellect). This proved controversial, if not iconoclastic.

After al-Darazī’s death, this mission was taken over by Ḥamzaḥ ibn ‘Alī, an Iranian. He gave al-Ḥākim’s cult a definitive Druze form. He described al-Ḥākim as the embodiment of the Ultimate One, the present locus of the Creator. He thus went beyond the Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* and the “Sunni” *tanẓīl*.

It is said that the Druze do not feel bound by two of the five pillars of Islam: fasting during Ramaḍān and the Hajj. They accept the seven commandments prescribed by Ḥamzaḥ ibn ‘Alī and his successor, Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Muktanā: speaking the truth among the faithful; helping and defending one another; renouncing all former faiths; dissociating themselves from unbelievers; recognizing the unity of the Lord in all ages; being content with whatever the Lord does; and submitting to His orders as conveyed by His cosmic ranks. They believe that when al-Ḥākim and Ḥamzaḥ ibn ‘Alī died — both of whom disappeared — someone always reappears to establish universal justice, especially from the pious amongst them, who will rule the human race.

With such un-conventional traits the Druze did not integrate into the larger Muslim society around. This drove them to the mountainous region of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. They are now to be found in southern Syria’s Druze mountain area, Lebanon’s Shouf region, and in northern Palestine.

‘Alawīs – the term *‘Alawī* (also anglicized as *Alawites*), came into vogue in Syria during the French mandate (1920–1946), replacing the earlier terms:

(1) *Nuṣayrī*, derived (according to some scholars) from the name of the first theologian of the sect, Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr, who in 245AH (857CE) proclaimed himself *bāb* (access) to the 10th Shī'ī Imam 'Alī al-Naqī and to his son, Muḥammad, who died before him; and (2) *Anṣāriyāh*, the name of the mountain range where they lived.

The 'Alawīs are an offshoot of the Twelver Shī'īs, sharing their belief that Imam 'Alī, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (ﷺ), was the legitimate heir but was deprived of his status by the first three *khalīfahs*. They portray 'Alī as a bearer of divine essence, and hold him in higher esteem than any of the earlier prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, including Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus (ﷺ). They are said to follow certain rituals derived from Christianity, including the celebration of Christmas and Epiphany (12 days after Christmas), and from Zoroastrianism, including Nawruz (the Persian New Year).

The seven pillars of the 'Alawī sect include not only the five pillars — *shahādah* (the article of faith), *ṣalāh* (five communions or prayers), *zakāh* (institutionalized alms giving), Hajj (pilgrimage), and *ṣiyām* (fasting during the month of Ramaḍān) — but also jihad and *walāyah* (interpreted to be devotion to Imam 'Alī's family and hatred of their adversaries). It is said that they share their annual festivals with Shī'īs such as 'Āshurā', and with Sunnīs and Shī'īs such as 'Īd al-Fiṭr and 'Īd al-Aḍḥā. Imam Mūsā al-Ṣadr, an eminent Twelver Shī'ī theologian based in Lebanon, ruled in 1974 that the 'Alawīs were part of the Shī'ī school of thought. Most present day 'Alawīs are settled as peasants, mainly in the mountainous region around Latakia, a port city in Syria, where they constitute about 8% of the national population.

55 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 202.

56 Narrated by 'Ā'ishah on the authority of al-Tirmidhī.

أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم خرج إلى بدر حتى إذا كان بحرة الوبر لحقه رجل من المشركين يذكر منه جرأة
ومجدة فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم تؤمن بالله ورسوله قال لا قال ارجع . فلن أستعين بمشرك

57 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 203.

58 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 204.

- 59 On the authority of Imam Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nisā'ī, and al-Tirmidhī.
من قتل دون ماله فهو شهيد
- 60 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 206.
- 61 Ibid., p. 207.
- 62 Ibid., p. 208.
- 63 Narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and recorded by al-Tirmidhī.
أنا سيد ولد آدم يوم القيامة ولا فخر وبيدي لواء الحمد ولا فخر وما من نبي يومئذ آدم فمن سواه إلا تحت لوائي وأنا أول من تنشق عنه الأرض ولا فخر
- 64 In some of the literature in Judeo-Christian books, one can easily sense the issue of race and gender. The extracts below, taken from *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, are indicative of this,
- “Adam — the biblical name of the first man... and progenitor of the human race, according to biblical tradition. Made in the *image of God* [italics ours] from the dust of the earth on the sixth day of creation, he was given dominion over the rest of the animate world. Subsequently, woman was created out of one of his ribs, being intended as ‘a help meant for him.’”
- “Adam was created from dust gathered from the whole world...”
- “His head was made of earth from the Holy Land, his body from Babylonia, and the various members from different lands.”
- Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder (editor), *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*.
(Oxford, UK: Roundhouse Publishing Co., 1992), p. 12.
- 65 The Arabic names Maryam, Zakarīyā, Hārūn, Mūsā, Yaḥyā, and 'Īsā (ﷺ) refer respectively to Mary, Zachariah, Aaron, Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus (ﷺ).
- 66 **Luke the Evangelist** (died, 84CE) – New Testament evangelist, a “Gentile” Christian, perhaps “the beloved physician” and companion of Paul (Colossians, 4:14; Philemon, 1:24), but like other issues this is disputed. Church tradition considers him a native of Antioch in Syria, and a martyr.

In the 2nd century CE, he was officially named as author of the third Church-recognized Gospel, and tradition has ever since ascribed to him both that work and the Acts of the Apostles.

67 **Herod Antipas** (died, 39CE) – son of Herod the Great and ruler (tetrarch) of Galilee and Peraea (4–39CE). An able client of the Romans, he enjoyed an especially good relationship with the Emperor Tiberias, but ran afoul of his successor, Caligula, largely through the machinations of his nephew, Herod Agrippa. In the Christian tradition, he looms large as the capricious murderer of John the Baptist (ﷺ).

68 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 219.

69 Narrated by 'Ā'ishah and recorded by Ibn Mājah.

النكاح من سنتي فمن لم يعمل بسنتي فليس مني وتزوجوا فإني مكاثر بكم الأمم ومن كان ذا طول فليتكح ومن لم يجد فعليه بالصوم فإن الصوم له وجاء

70 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and recorded by Abū Dāwūd.

تزوجوا الولود الودود فإني مكاثر بكم الأمم

71 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik on the authority of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

قالت أم سليم للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: أنس خادمك . قال: (اللهم أكثر ماله . وولده . وبارك له فيما أعطيته)

72 Consider briefly what previous *mufasssirs* have found useful in the Judeo-Christian account of Yaḥyá (ﷺ). The ministry of Jesus began with the mission of John the Baptist (ﷺ); through the preaching and baptism of John, Jesus (ﷺ) received his first impulse to public action. No man exerted a greater influence over Jesus than John (ﷺ); for Jesus, John was the greatest of the prophets (ﷺ). John's (ﷺ) career marked the boundary between the Old Age and the New Age (Matthew, 11:7–15; Luke, 7:24–30; Luke, 16:16; Acts, 1:21; Acts, 10:36–37).

According to established Christian history, John was a wonder-child, born to a priestly couple in their old age. For some years before his “manifestation to Israel,” he lived “in the wilderness of Judea” (Luke, 1:5–25; 2:57–80). Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has been thought probable that John's wilderness sojourn was not solitary; perhaps he lived for a time in a community of the Essenes, a Jewish sect that is thought to have produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian,

writes that the Essenes “adopted other men’s children” and “molded them according to their principles.” All speculation aside, the locale of John’s (ﷺ) ministry and the residence of these dissident priests were inspired by the same summons of Isaiah, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah, 40:3; Mark, 1:3, King James Version). John’s (ﷺ) eschatological message closely resembles that of the Dead Sea sect, but John’s (ﷺ) rite of baptism differs in meaning from the “purifying waters” of the Essenes.

John’s (ﷺ) public proclamation demanded “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark, 1:4; Luke, 3:3). He also “...preached, saying, ‘There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost (and with fire)’” (Mark, 1:7–8; Matthew, 3:11; Luke, 3:16, King James Version). In the Synoptic Gospels, there is a tendency, in Jewish eschatology, to identify John (ﷺ) with the Elijah who will come in the future (Matthew, 11:14; Matthew, 17:10–12; Malachi, 4:5–6). In the Fourth Gospel, John (ﷺ) is merely the “voice” of Isaiah (Isaiah, 40:3), and John’s identity with Elijah or the Messiah is sharply denied (John, 1:6–8, 19–22; 3:25–36).

John’s (ﷺ) teaching was intensely eschatological. He warned of the imminent Day of Judgment; God’s retribution would soon fall upon the apostates of Israel. The merits of the patriarchs would provide no escape, and descent from Abraham (ﷺ) would be no advantage; only sincere repentance would avert “the wrath to come.” Moreover, those who confessed their sins and received John’s (ﷺ) baptism were commanded to “bear good fruit,” and follow in “the way of righteousness” he taught. Luke reports that John’s (ﷺ) preaching aroused the consciences of groups such as tax collectors and soldiers, who were especially susceptible to temptations to expropriate goods (Luke, 3:10–14). All his disciples were taught the discipline of prayer and fasting (Luke, 5:33; Luke, 11:1; Mark, 2:19–20).

First-century Jewish sources provide no exact antecedents for or parallels to John’s (ﷺ) ritual baptism. Cleansing ceremonies, using “waters of purification,” are prescribed in the Torah, and the priest-prophet Ezekiel — may refer to Dhū al-Kifl (ﷺ) in the Qur’an — declared that God, at the end times, will purify the people with clean water and give them a new heart and new spirit (Ezekiel, 36:22–36). At the time of John (ﷺ), the conditions and circumstances may have required elaboration of the purity laws. The Pharisees, an influential minority group with Palestinian Judaism, who did not retreat into the wilderness, but lived among the corrupt, attached great importance to ceremonial bathing. The custom of baptizing gentile converts to Judaism is closer to John’s (ﷺ) rite, although it cannot be proved that proselyte baptism antedates John (ﷺ). It is possible that John (ﷺ) deliberately applied to the “Children of Abraham” a rite devised by them to give

salvation to pagans, thus showing his conviction that the whole Jewish people needed to be reconstituted as the people of God. It seems that the form of John's (ﷺ) baptism was determined by the nature of his proclamation. Whatever partial parallels existed in Jewish practice, John's (ﷺ) imagery was drawn from Jewish apocalyptic eschatology, which represented divine judgment as a stream of fire, sometimes issuing from the throne of God or as the fiery breath of the Messiah (Daniel, 7:10–11; 2 Thessalonians, 2:8; Revelations, 8:5; 20:9–15). Repentant individuals were called to enact in advance their acceptance of God's judgement on them.

From the perspective of the Gospels, the climax of John's mission was his baptism of Jesus (ﷺ). Given the significance of the rite as a confession of sin, it is not surprising that some early Christians were puzzled. Only Matthew, among the three early Gospels, offers an explanation: in defense of his baptism, Jesus' response to John's (ﷺ) hesitation was, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented." (Matthew, 3:15, New International Version). The "son's" perfect obedience and the "Father's" choice of his "beloved son" foretell the significance of Jesus' (ﷺ) work (compare with John, 5:20, 30).

After Jesus' baptism, John (ﷺ) carried his campaign to Samaria. Jesus (ﷺ) remained in Judea and conducted a brief baptismal ministry of his own. Some of John's disciples attached themselves to Jesus (ﷺ), and this is presented in the Gospel in such a way as to suggest that Jesus' (ﷺ) withdrawal to Galilee was prompted by a wish to avoid potential rivalries (John, 1:35–37; 3:22–24). Upon his return to the original area of his ministry, John (ﷺ) was arrested by Herod Antipas, whose territory included Perea as well as Galilee. Antipas may have feared the rapid expansion of the Baptist movement. The Synoptic evangelists report that John (ﷺ) had denounced Antipas's marriage to his sister-in-law, a denunciation that also had political consequences (Mark, 6:7–29; Luke, 3:19). While in prison at the remote Perea fortress, Machaerus, John sent a message to Jesus (ﷺ) and the following exchange took place, "When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me'" (Matthew, 11:2–6; Luke, 7:18–23, New International Version). John's reaction to Jesus' (ﷺ) reply is not recorded.

John's influence extended beyond his martyrdom. Six years later Herod Antipas was defeated by a Nabatean army, an event regarded by some as a divine punishment for Herod's murder of John the Baptist (ﷺ). Acts, 19:1–7 points to a group in Ephesus who claimed to have been baptized with John's baptism. The fourth evangelist's treatment of John the Baptist (ﷺ) suggests

the presence of persons ascribing to John (✠) a messianic status. The historical connection between John's followers and the Mandaeans is uncertain. Despite the existence of these later rivalries, it is said that from earliest times Christians have believed that John was the divinely appointed predecessor of Jesus (✠), and in his life and death prepared the way for the Messiah.

Essenes – a Jewish sect renowned in antiquity for its asceticism, communistic life-style, and skill in predicting the future. The famous Dead Sea Scrolls are believed to have belonged to a local Essene community.

Synoptic Gospels – a term applied to the three New Testament Gospels authored by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, so called because of the striking amount of common material they contain. Most of Mark's Gospel, for example, is reproduced in Matthew and Luke, and the correspondence often extends to the order of passages and wording, although differences also exist. The precise way in which the works are interrelated is known as the *synoptic problem*, for which many competing solutions have been offered. John's Gospel presents a strikingly different portrayal of Jesus.

Pharisees – An influential minority group within Palestinian Judaism before 70CE, mainly consisting of laymen; possibly originating out of the Hasidim who opposed the political aspirations of John Hyrcanus I (2nd century BCE). They were noted for their separation from the common people, and for their punctilious observance of written and oral laws regarding ritual purity, cleansing, and food laws, assuming even the obligations placed upon priests. In the New Testament Gospels, they are often portrayed as the opponents of Jesus (✠). After the fall of Jerusalem in 70CE, it was from Pharisaic circles that the rabbinic movement arose.

Nabateans – people of Arabian origins who lived in Edom (region in south-east Palestine) in the 6th century BCE, establishing their capital at Petra. Originally nomads, the Nabateans soon learned to develop agriculture under almost desert conditions by an elaborate system of water conservation. They profited from their position next to the Elat-Ghazzah road and the northern outlet of the Arabian desert by fostering caravan trade. For this purpose they established a chain of agricultural colonies across the Naqab (Negev) desert. During the decay of the Seleucid Empire, the Nabateans extended their power up to and including Damascus, coming into conflict with Alexander Yannai. Subdued by the Romans in 63BCE, their country was annexed in 106CE, and became the Provincia Arabia. The Nabateans are said to have developed a remarkable Arab-Hellenistic culture, especially in their rock-cut city of Petra (currently in Jordan).

Ephesus – known as *Efes* in Turkish; ancient city of Lydia and important Greek city-state on the west coast of Asia Minor; at the mouth of Bayindir, near the Aegean coast. It is considered to be the center of the cult of Cybele (an Anatolian fertility goddess) and the place of worship of Artemis/Diana, whose temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. In Roman times, it was the principal city of the province of Asia, and seat of the Roman governor.

Mandaeans – small gnostic sect in Iran and Iraq who believe that the spiritual soul will be freed from its imprisonment in the evil material world by the redeemer, Manda d'Hayye (the knowledge of life).

73 Maryam (ﷺ) is viewed by some Muslim scholars as having the status of an authority. There are also some who said that she may be considered in the ranks of prophets by the mere fact that the angels spoke to her. But the observed rule is that prophethood is a function of men. Therefore, even though Maryam (ﷺ) may have experienced what prophets do, it is considered a gesture of divine honor toward her for her authority position and not because she was a prophet per se.

74 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik and recorded by al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mardawayh.
خير نساء العالمين أربع مريم بنت عمران وآسية بنت مزاحم امرأة فرعون وخديجة بنت خويلد وفاطمة بنت محمد
صلى الله عليه وسلم

75 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās.
سيدة نساء أهل الجنة بعد مريم بنت عمران فاطمة [بنت محمد] وخديجة . وآسية امرأة فرعون .

76 Luke 1:26–35, King James Version.

77 **Septuagint** – a translation into Greek of the Hebrew Bible, obtaining its name (meaning *translation of the 70*) from a legend in the Letter of Aristeas (2nd century BCE) about its composition as the work of 72 scholars, six from each of the 12 tribes of Israel). The translation was begun in the 3rd century BCE to meet the need of Greek-speaking Jews in the Diaspora, but work progressed by several stages over about a century. It has a different order of books from the ones in the Hebrew Canon, and contains some works not in that canon. When it was adopted by Christians as their preferred version of the Old Testament, it lost favor among the Jews.

78 **Stoicism** – philosophical movement which flourished in the Hellenistic Roman period from around 320BCE–200CE alongside and in competition with Epicureanism and Scepticism. The Stoics, named after the *Painted Stoa* (colonnade — a row of evenly spaced columns) where they met, believed in

a rational, materialistic, and deterministic universe in which virtue consisted in understanding natural necessity and then cheerfully accepting it; the individual soul is literally a part of the larger cosmos, into which it is absorbed. The major figures in its formulation were the founder, Zeno of Citium, and the two succeeding heads of the school, Cleanthes and Chrysippus. It accorded well with the ethos of Rome, and was later taken up by such figures as Seneca and Epictetus.

79 **Philo Judaeus** – Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, Egypt who lived in the 1st century CE. In 40CE he undertook a mission to Caligula to protest against the emperor's claim to divine honors. In his writings Philo Judaeus attempts to reconcile Judaism with Platonic and Stoic ideas.

80 **Arianism** – a system of Christian theology that gave God, the Father, primacy over Christ. It was founded around 310CE by Arius, and condemned as heretical at the Council of Nicaea in 325CE. Some 17th- and 18th-century theologians held Arian views akin to those of Unitarianism (that God is a single being, and that there is no such thing as the Trinity). In the 1970s the question of the heresy arose again for the Vatican in the writings of such theologians as Edouard Schillebeeckx (1914–2009) of the Netherlands.

81 **Council of Nicaea (325CE)** – refer to endnote 117 in this volume.

First Council of Constantinople (381CE) – also called the Second Ecumenical Council, it was convened by Theodosius I between the Assyrian Church of the East, the Oriental Orthodox, the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman Catholics, the Old Catholics, and a number of other Western Christian churches. This council was called because the Council of Nicaea did not end the Arian controversy, which it had been called to clarify. Up until 360CE, there was much theological debate about the divinity of Jesus (✝), the second consciousness of the Trinity; however since there had been little prior discussion about the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the third consciousness in the Trinity, and because the Council of Nicaea had not clarified it, there was debate on the issue in this council. In the end, the Council of Constantinople condemned Arianism and reaffirmed the Nicene Trinity, even though many in the aftermath of the Council of Nicaea, including Emperor Constantine I, had begun to regret the decisions taken in the Nicene Council.

82 **Monarchianism** – a form of belief in the Christian Trinity that emphasizes the undifferentiated unity of God. It was common in the early 3rd century CE.

Sabellius – a man who is a virtual unknown in his person and career, but eventually lent his name to a movement, *Sabellianism*, which attempted to

take serious account of the trinitarian structure of the Church's faith. It did so by using the terms *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* to denote, not distinct realities within the Godhead, but three roles or "modes" in which the one God successively shows himself in relation to the world and to humankind, that is, as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

- 83 In 1 Kings, 18, where Elijah was engaged in a contest with the priests of Baal, "the fire of the Lord" fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones of the altar, the dust, and the water in the trench around it. All the onlookers proclaimed that Yahweh is God. Other miracles were signs of divine judgment, as when the prophet warned the wicked king Jeroboam that the pagan priests and the altar will be consumed, as indeed they quickly were (2 Kings, 17:20–24). Still other miracles are signs of divine compassion, as when God, through the Prophet Elisha (ﷺ), fed the poor widow and her guests (2 Kings, 4:1–7).
- 84 In Daniel, 1–3, the assurance of divine protection of the faithful is symbolized by the stories of God's nurturing those who refused to eat impure food, God's preservation in the fiery furnace of those who refused to worship the pagan king, and God's protection from the lions of those who defied the royal prohibition against prayer to the God of Israel. The point is clear: God would act directly on behalf of those who stand firm against the forces of evil and tyranny, and their schemes to corrupt or destroy God's faithful people.
- 85 The Gospel writers give accounts of divinely granted portents, in which discerning eyes can see the hand of God shaping history. Thus the magi, members of the Zoroastrian priesthood of the ancient Persians, are led by a strange star to visit the birthplace of Jesus (ﷺ). Earthquakes, according only to the Book of Matthew, occur at the moment of Jesus' (ﷺ) death and of the opening of his tomb on the morning of the Resurrection (Matthew, 27:51–54; 28:1–6). The Synoptic Gospels agree that the Sun was darkened as the hour of Jesus' (ﷺ) supposed death approached (Mark, 15:33; Matthew, 27:45; Luke, 23: 44).
- 86 The mild, tuberculoid form of leprosy is not contagious. More than five million people worldwide are infected with leprosy. It is most common in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean. About 5,000 people in the US are infected, most of them in California, Hawaii, and Texas. The infection can become apparent at any age, most commonly beginning in people when they are in their 20s and 30s. There is no authenticated information as to the age of the leper who was healed by 'Īsá (ﷺ).
Mycobacterium leprae is the only known bacterium that invades peripheral nerves, and almost all of its complications are a direct consequence of

this invasion. Because the ability to sense touch, pain, and temperature fluctuations becomes compromised, people with peripheral nerve damage may inadvertently burn, cut, or otherwise harm themselves. Also, damage to peripheral nerves may cause muscle weakness, at times resulting in clawing of the fingers and a “drop foot” deformity. Hence people with leprosy may become disfigured. They may develop sores on the soles of the feet. Damage to the nasal passages can also result in a chronically stuffy nose. Eye damage may lead to blindness. Men with lepromatous leprosy may become impotent and infertile.

- 87 Biblical references for people taught by,
 1. John the Baptist (ﷺ), Matthew, 9:14;
 2. the Pharisees, Matthew, 22:16; and
 3. Jesus (ﷺ), Matthew, 20:17.

- 88 Narrated by Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh on the authority of Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī.

مكث رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم عشر سنين يتبع الناس في منازلهم في المواسم بمنى وغيرها يقول: من يؤويني. من ينصرني حتى أبلغ رسالة ربي وله الجنة؟ حتى بعثنا الله له من يثرب فصدقناه. فذكر الحديث حتى قال: فرحل إليه منا سبعون رجلا . فوعدها بيعة العقبة . فقلنا: علام نبايك؟ فقال: على السمع والطاعة في النشاط والكسل . وعلى النفقة في العسر واليسر . وعلى الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر . وعلى أن تنصروني إذا قدمت عليكم يثرب . فتمنعوني ما تمنعون منه أنفسكم وأزواجكم وأبناءكم . ولكم الجنة.

- 89 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1411AH), p. 241.

- 90 Recorded by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.

أنه كان يقول إذا أصبح وقام من نومه : الحمد لله الذي أحيانا بعد ما أماتنا وإليه التشور

- 91 Narrated by Abū Hurayrah on the authority of Muslim.

والله! لينزل ابن مريم حكما عادلا . فليكسرن الصليب. وليقتلن الخنزير . وليضعن الجزية. ولتتركن القلاص فلا يسعى عليها. ولتذهبن الشحناء والتباغض والتحاسد. وليدعون (وليدعون) إلى المال فلا يقبله أحد

- 92 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1411AH), p. 246.

- 93 Narrated by Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān on the authority of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājāh.

جاء العقاب والسيد . صاحبا جران . إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يريدان أن يلاعنا . قال : فقال أحدهما لصاحبه: لا تفعل . فوالله لئن كان نبيا فلاعنا لا نفلح نحن ولا عقبننا من بعدنا . قال : إنا نعطيك ما سألتنا .

وابعث معنا رجلاً أميناً . ولا تبعث معنا إلا أميناً . فقال: (الأبعثن معكم رجلاً أميناً حق أمين). فاستشرف له أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم . فقال: (قم يا أبا عبيدة بن الجراح). فلما قام . قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: (هذا أمين هذه الأمة).

- 94 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 248.
- 95 Transmitted by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī on the authority of al-Bukhārī, Imam Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, al-Nisā'ī, and al-Tirmidhī.
- إن ابني هذا سيد . . .
- 96 Narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb on the authority of al-Ṭabarānī, al-Ḥākim, and al-Bayhaqī.
- كل سبب ونسب منقطع يوم القيامة إلا سببي ونسبي
- 97 An excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI's comments at the University of Regensburg in Germany on 9-20-2006 as to why Turkey should not be admitted into the European Union (for a full text of the speech, refer to CatholicCulture.org at <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/features/index.cfm?recnum=46474>),

“I was reminded of all this recently, when I read the edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue carried on — perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara — by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both. It was probably the emperor himself who set down this dialogue, during the siege of Constantinople between 1394 and 1402; and this would explain why his arguments are given in greater detail than the responses of the learned Persian.

“The dialogue ranges widely over the structures of faith contained in the Bible and in the Qur'an, and deals especially with the image of God and of man, while necessarily returning repeatedly to the relationship of the three Laws: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. In this lecture I would like to discuss only one point — itself rather marginal to the dialogue itself — which, in the context of the issue of faith and reason, I found interesting and which can serve as the starting-point for my reflections on this issue.

“In the seventh conversation edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the jihad (holy war). The emperor must have known that surah 2, 256 reads: *There is no compulsion in religion*. It is one of the surahs of the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat.

“But naturally the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur’an, concerning holy war. Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the “Book” and the “infidels,” he turns to his interlocutor somewhat brusquely with the central question on the relationship between religion and violence in general, in these words:

Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.

The emperor goes on to explain in detail the reasons why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul.

God is not pleased by blood, and not acting reasonably is contrary to God's nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats... To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death...

“The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature. The editor, Theodore Khoury, observes: ‘For the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy, this statement is self-evident. But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality.’ Here Khoury quotes a work of the noted French Islamist R. Arnaldez, who points out that Ibn Hazn [referring possibly to Ibn Ḥazm] went so far as to state that God is not bound even by his own word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. Were it God’s will, we would even have to practice idolatry.

“As far as understanding of God and thus the concrete practice of religion is concerned, we find ourselves faced with a dilemma which nowadays challenges us directly. Is the conviction that acting unreasonably contradicts God’s nature merely a Greek idea, or is it always and intrinsically true? I believe that here we can see the profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the biblical understanding of faith in God. Modifying the first verse of the Book of Genesis, John began the prologue of his Gospel with the words: In the beginning was the logos. This is the very word used by the emperor: God acts with logos.

“Logos means both reason and word — a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. John thus spoke the final

word on the biblical concept of God, and in this word all the often toilsome and tortuous threads of biblical faith find their culmination and synthesis. In the beginning was the logos, and the logos is God, says the Evangelist.

“The encounter between the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance. The vision of Saint Paul, who saw the roads to Asia barred and in a dream saw a Macedonian man plead with him: *Come over to Macedonia and help us!* (cf. Acts 16:6-10) — this vision can be interpreted as a distillation of the intrinsic necessity of a rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek inquiry.

“In point of fact, this rapprochement had been going on for some time. The mysterious name of God, revealed from the burning bush, a name which separates this God from all other divinities with their many names and declares simply that he is, is already [sic] presents a challenge to the notion of myth, to which Socrates’s attempt to vanquish and transcend myth stands in close analogy. Within the Old Testament, the process which started at the burning bush came to new maturity at the time of the Exile, when the God of Israel, an Israel now deprived of its land and worship, was proclaimed as the God of heaven and earth and described in a simple formula which echoes the words uttered at the burning bush: I am.

“This new understanding of God is accompanied by a kind of enlightenment, which finds stark expression in the mockery of gods who are merely the work of human hands (cf. Ps 115). Thus, despite the bitter conflict with those Hellenistic rulers who sought to accommodate it forcibly to the customs and idolatrous cult of the Greeks, biblical faith, in the Hellenistic period, encountered the best of Greek thought at a deep level, resulting in a mutual enrichment evident especially in the later wisdom literature.

“Today we know that the Greek translation of the Old Testament produced at Alexandria — the Septuagint — is more than a simple (and in that sense perhaps less than satisfactory) translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of revelation, one which brought about this encounter in a way that was decisive for the birth and spread of Christianity. A profound encounter of faith and reason is taking place here, an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: Not to act “with logos” is contrary to God’s nature.

“In all honesty, one must observe that in the late Middle Ages we find trends in theology which would sunder this synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit. In contrast with the so-called intellectualism of Augustine and Thomas, there arose with Duns Scotus a voluntarism which ultimately led to the claim that we can only know God’s voluntas ordinata. Beyond this is the realm of God’s freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done. This gives

rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazn [possibly again referring to Ibn Hazm] and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions.

"As opposed to this, the faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language (cf. Lateran IV). God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism; rather, the truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as logos and, as logos, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf. Certainly, love transcends knowledge and is thereby capable of perceiving more than thought alone (cf. Eph 3:19); nonetheless it continues to be love of the God who is logos. Consequently, Christian worship is worship in harmony with the eternal Word and with our reason (cf. Rom 12:1).

"This inner rapprochement between Biblical faith and Greek philosophical inquiry was an event of decisive importance not only from the standpoint of the history of religions, but also from that of world history — it is an event which concerns us even today. Given this convergence, it is not surprising that Christianity, despite its origins and some significant developments in the East, finally took on its historically decisive character in Europe. We can also express this the other way around: this convergence, with the subsequent addition of the Roman heritage, created Europe and remains the foundation of what can rightly be called Europe."

98 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 251.

99 Ibid.

100 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and recorded by al-Tirmidhī.

سأل اليهود قائلين: والله يا محمد. لقد علمت أنا أولى بدين إبراهيم منك ومن غيرك. وإنه كان يهوديا. وما بك إلا الحمسد. فأنزل الله تعالى هذه الآية.

وروى الترمذي عن عبد الله بن مسعود قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «إن لكل نبي ولاة من النبيين. وإن وليي أبي وخليلي ربي. ثم قرأ: إن أولى الناس بإبراهيم للذين اتبعوه. وهذا النبي الآية»

101 Narrated by 'Adī ibn Ḥātim.

روى عدي بن حاتم قال: «أتيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وفي عنقي صليب من ذهب، فقال: يا عدي، اطرح عنك هذا الوثن، وسمعتة يقرأ في سورة براءة: اتخذوا أحوارهم ورهبانهم أربابا من دون الله فقلت له: يا رسول الله، لم يكونوا يعبدونهم، فقال: ما كانوا يحللون لكم ويحرمون، فتأخذون بأقوالهم؟ قال: نعم، فقال عليه الصلاة والسلام: هو ذاك». وعلى هذا خوطب أهل الكتاب بهذا الخطاب لأنهم جعلوا أحوارهم في الطاعة لهم كالآرياب.

102 Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh al-Ḥaydarabādī, *Majmū'ah al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyyah fi al-'Aḥdi al-Nabawīyi wa-al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah* (Cairo, Egypt: Maktabah al-Thaqāfah al-Dīnīyah, 1360AH), p. 35.

Heraclius (575–641) – Byzantine emperor from 610CE. His reign marked a turning point in the empire's fortunes. Of Armenian descent, he recaptured Armenia in 622CE, and other provinces (622–628) from the Persians, but lost them to the Muslims (629–641).

103 **Haran** – a northern Mesopotamian city located within a region called Paddan-aram in the Old Testament. Haran was famous for its aggressive role in caravan trade (Ezekiel, 27:23) and religious devotion to the Mesopotamian moon god: Sin. The tradition that Terah, his son Abraham, and other relatives migrated northward from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran (Genesis, 11:31) may be historically suspect; their sojourn in Haran and Terah's death there (Genesis, 11:32) are widely accepted. In the general Jewish and Christian historical mind Haran is said to be the starting point of Abraham's (ﷺ) journey of faith into Canaan (Genesis, 12:4–5). Long after his arrival, and Isaac's birth, Abraham (ﷺ), we are told, kept in touch with Haran. Rebekah, Isaac's (ﷺ) wife, was secured from Haran's neighbor city Nahor (Genesis, 24:10–66). Later, their son Jacob (ﷺ) fled to Paddan-aram to obtain asylum with his uncle Laban, whose daughters, Leah and Rachel, he married (Genesis, 27:43; 28:10; 29:21–29).

Ur – ancient Babylonian city. It was the home of Abraham (ﷺ) before his family's departure for Haran. Modern excavations in the ruins, conducted by Sir Leonard Woolley, are said to have revealed a "highly-civilized" nature of the city in Abraham's time as well as evidence of an extensive flood at an earlier date.

Shechem – ancient town in Palestine, once the capital of Samaria. In the Old Testament, it is the traditional burial place of Joseph; nearby is Jacob's well (ﷺ). Shechem was destroyed by the Roman emperor Vespasian; on its site stands Nablus (a diminution of the word Neapolis) said to have been built by the Roman emperor Hadrian.

Mamre – locality in the immediate vicinity of al-Khalil (Hebron) named after one of Abraham's (ﷺ) friends (Genesis, 14:13).

104 The Reverend Franklin Graham, son of the more well-known Reverend Billy Graham^a who himself has been the darling of the West's political and military establishments, is a good example. He wants the people of the United States to know that the god of Islam is not the Christian God. The god of Islam is not a father. The God of Christianity, he says, was the Father of Jesus Christ (ﷺ). The 50-year-old evangelist has made his dislike of certain Islamic practices known far and wide. On American national television he said the Qur'an preaches violence and that Islamic extremism is "a greater threat than anyone's willing to speak [of]."^b After the 9/11 attacks, Mr. Graham, in his public statements, denounced Islam as a religion that promotes violence. In October 2001, at the dedication of a chapel in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, he referred to Islam as "wicked, violent, and not of the same God."

Graham was defended by others in the US media and academic establishment. William F. Buckley Jr.,^c a Catholic and the father of modern American conservatism, defended Mr. Graham in a widely remarked commentary in the *National Review* magazine; he said that the charges by Franklin Graham "...are not only justified, they are unanswerable."^d Graham's father, the Reverend Billy Graham has been a regular visitor to the White House for the past four decades, especially when the White House needed religious blessings for its wars; and he has always obliged obediently.

Whenever Muslims do not have any backbone in interfaith meetings, the rhetoric turns against them. This has been demonstrated again and again. In yet another barb, in 2002 leading evangelical Christians, including the Reverend Jerry Falwell,^e supported a prominent Southern Baptist preacher's condemnation of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a "demon-possessed paedophile" (*nastaghfir-allāh*).^f The Reverend Jerry Vines, pastor of the 25,000-member First Baptists Church of Jacksonville, Florida, spoke to fellow ministers on June 10, 2002, the eve of the Southern Baptists' annual meeting in St. Louis. He told several thousand delegates that people promoting religious pluralism are responsible for many of the country's problems. He said they are implying that Islam is just as good as Christianity. "Christianity was founded by the virgin-born son of God, Jesus Christ. Islam was founded by Muhammad, a demon-possessed paedophile, who had 12 wives, the last one of which was a 9-year-old," said Vines. He added that the Muslim deity is not the same as the God worshipped by Christians, "And I tell you Allah is not Jehovah, either. Jehovah's not going to turn you into a terrorist," he added.

The next day, US president Bush addressed the Southern Baptist Conference meeting via satellite, extolling the Baptists' "extraordinary

influence” on American history. The Reverend Jerry Falwell called Vines “my friend” and said that the Jacksonville pastor’s remarks were derived from a book, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider’s Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs*, by Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner, brothers who were raised as Muslims, became Christians in 1982, and went on to teach at Baptist colleges.⁶ The newly elected president of the Southern Baptists, the Reverend Jack Graham, also defended Vines’ speech as “accurate.” The Southern Baptist Convention is a coalition of 42,000 churches with 16 million members.

- a **William Franklin “Billy” Graham** (1918–present) – refer to endnote 140 in volume 3.
- b Fox News, August 2002. Franklin Graham, in defending some of the comments he has made against Islam, wrote an article on his own view; it can be found at <http://www.covenantnews.com/graham.htm>.
- c **William Frank Buckley, Jr.** (1925–2008) – US conservative political writer, novelist, and founder-editor of the *National Review*, 1955. In such books as *Up from Liberalism* (1959), and in a weekly television debate *Firing Line*, he represented the “intellectual” right-wing, anti-liberal stance in US political thought.
- d William F. Buckley, Jr., *Are We Owed an Apology? Muslim leaders remain mute on 9/11*. (New York: National Review Online, Editorial, August 16, 2002). <http://www.nationalreview.com/buckley/buckley081602.asp>
- e **Baptists** – a worldwide communion of Christians, who believe in the baptism only of believers prepared to make a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ. They have certain links with the 16th century Anabaptists, but mainly derive from early 17th century England and Wales, where Baptist churches spread rapidly, and in the USA, where the first Baptist church was established in 1639 at Providence, Rhode Island. A rapid increase took place in the late 18th and 19th centuries in the USA, especially among the Southern African American population. African American Baptist churches, and their ministers, played an important role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, led by Martin Luther King. Strongly biblical, the emphasis in worship is on scripture and preaching. Individual congregations are autonomous, but usually linked together in associations or unions. The Baptist World Alliance was formed in 1905. In 1990 there were over 140 member denominations, representing over 35 million baptized members.

- f Reverend Jerry Falwell, *Muhammad, a 'demon-possessed pedophile'?* (Washington, DC: WorldNetDaily.com, Editorial, June 15, 2002). http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=27975
- g Emir Fethi Caner and Ergun Mehmet Caner, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life & Beliefs*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2002).
- 105 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidahi wa al-Shari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir, 1411AH), p. 259.
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 **Noachian Laws or Laws of Noah** – seven laws which the rabbis hold binding upon all mankind, derived from early chapters of the Book of Genesis (9:4–7). Six of these laws are negations, prohibiting idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, robbery, and the eating of flesh cut from a living animal. The single affirmative commandment is that requiring the establishment of courts of justice. The Noachian Laws were much discussed by European scholars in the 17th century in connection with the Law of Nations.
- 108 According to Jewish history the Temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586BCE. Then the temple was rebuilt (538–515BCE) and this is referred to as the Second Temple.
- 109 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidahi wa al-Shari'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir, 1411AH), p. 265.
- 110 Ibid., pp. 265–266.
- 111 Evidence of the folly of Muslims' placing their resources in the institutions of the powers that oppress them comes with the trillion-dollar lawsuit that 600 family members of the victims of the 9/11 attacks on the US have filed against a range of defendants, including Saudi Arabian princes, the government of Sudan, banks, Muslim charities, and other groups they accuse of helping finance "terrorists." The defendants named include three members of the Saudi royal family; seven banks including institutions in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Switzerland and Somalia; and eight Muslim charities that the plaintiffs claim are fronts for terrorism. The charitable groups include the International Islamic Relief Organization, Sanabel al-Kheer, Inc., the

Muslim World League, the SAAR Foundation, Rabita Trust, al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, Benevolence International Foundation, and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth.

The 258-page complaint seeks to cut off the pipeline that fueled the “terrorists.” The complaint puts the damages in excess of one trillion dollars. It also charges the defendants with racketeering, wrongful death, negligence, and conspiracy. The suit blames certain Saudi Arabian leaders and institutions for the “terrorist” assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Altogether, there are 900 plaintiffs, including spouses, children, siblings, and parents of those who perished, as well as survivors of the terrorist attacks. These plaintiffs are from 20 states and the District of Columbia, plus the nation-states of Canada, Argentina, France, Paraguay, and South Africa. The suit relies, in part, on assertions by officials of the US Treasury and State Departments, along with statements from foreign governments. Many of the assertions about the role of the charities and banks, in particular, have been made public before. Some of the accusations in the lawsuit are based on a variety of sources, including bank records and unpublished intelligence memos from the French government. The suit does not allege that the Saudi defendants directly participated in the 9/11 attacks, or approved them. Instead, the plaintiffs contend that some of the leading figures in Saudi society — businessmen, charity executives, and members of the royal family — gave money to foundations and front groups that sustained al-Qaeda and moved its moneys.

Several Saudi banks and Muslim charities named in the lawsuit by families of 9/11 victims vehemently deny any role in funding terrorism, and criticize the case as an attempt to extort Saudi wealth. The royals are beginning to have their brush with reality. The suit has sparked rare calls by Saudi commentators and newspapers in the kingdom for the traditionally strong Saudi-US ties to be reviewed. (In 2009, the US Supreme Court rejected the class-action lawsuit against Saudi Arabia brought by 9/11 survivors and relatives of those killed in the attacks. The court’s decision not to allow an appeal of the case to go forward effectively ended the effort to sue the government of Saudi Arabia and several members of the Saudi royal family over the country’s alleged behind-the-scenes role in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In its decision, the Supreme Court let stand a federal appeals court’s ruling that “sovereign immunity” — the notion that a country cannot be sued in another country’s courts — means that the lawsuit cannot go forward).

112 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-‘Aqidahi wa al-Shari‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āshir, 1411AH), p. 271.

113 Ibid., p. 272.

114 **Baruch** or **Benedict de Spinoza** (1632–1677) – Dutch philosopher who believed in a rationalistic pantheism (belief in multiple gods) that owed much to Descartes’ mathematical appreciation of the universe. Mind and matter are two modes of an infinite substance that he called God or nature, good and evil being relative. He was a determinist, believing that human action was motivated by self-preservation. *Ethics* (1677) was his main work; *A Treatise on Religious and Political Philosophy* (1670) was the only one of his works published during his life, and was attacked by Christians. In 1656, he was excommunicated by the Jewish community in Amsterdam on charges of heretical thought and practice. He was a lens-grinder by trade.



Ezra – in the Old Testament, a Hebrew scribe who was allowed by Artaxerxes, king of Persia (probably Artaxerxes I, 464–423BCE), to lead his people back to Jerusalem from Babylon, 458BCE. He reestablished the Mosaic law and forbade intermarriage.

115 This was by no means the first time that a critical spirit had been applied to the Jewish and Christian scriptures. There were precedents, centuries earlier, not only among Christian scholars but also among Jews. Abraham ibn Ezra (1092–1167), who died during the Crusades, mentioned and rejected a theory that significant parts of the Book of Genesis were written during the time of Jehoshaphat (a king of Judah, 874–850BCE) and, while noting one awkward interpolation, comments “he who is wise will be silent.” After Spinoza, the French physician Jean Astruc (1684–1766) identified two main sources (authors) in the original composition of the Book of Genesis, characterized respectively by the use of *Yhwh* and *Elohim* to designate the divine name. The German theologian Wilhelm de Wette (1780–1849) identified Deuteronomy as the book which was found in 621BCE during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah 647–609BCE (2 Kings, 22:8). Julius Wellhausen (1844–1919), in the second half of the 19th century, developed the *documentary hypothesis*. The general conclusions of the critical school are that the Hexateuch (that is, the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua) consists of four main sources, denoted by the symbols *J* (*Jahwist* or *Yahwist*, that is, using the divine name *Yhwh*, 9th century), *E* (*Elohist*, that is, using the divine name *Elohim*, 8th century), *D* (*Deuteronomist*, that is, author of Deuteronomy, 7th century), and *P* (*Priestly*, the author of the priestly code, 5th century); while *JE* denotes the combination of *J* and *E* by a redactor (someone who puts texts into appropriate form for publication), in the 7th century. Some schol-

ars go further and isolate some of the subdivisions by giving them special symbols. A clear distinction is made, however, between the date assigned to the publication of each source and the age of the material it contains, because the primary materials are much older.

For the critical study of the text of the Hebrew Bible, the main materials are (1) comparison of duplicated passages; (2) the evidence of the Samaritan Pentateuch, the ancient translations especially the Septuagint, and now the Dead Sea scrolls; (3) the rules of parallelism in ancient Hebrew poetry; and (4) recurring types of scribal error.

Of the last, the most common are confusion of letters of similar form (in both the ancient and square scripts), accidental transposition of letters within a word, wrong division of words, dittography (the accidental duplication of a letter or group of letters) and, conversely, haplography (the failure to repeat a letter or group of letters). The presence of scribal errors was recognized early by the rabbis, as indicated by their directives for oral correction. Modern textual studies also distinguish categories of glosses (a translation, explanation, interpretation, or paraphrase of a word or phrase) incorporated into the text. While many discrepancies may be due to faulty copying, some reflect variant traditional readings. In recent years, many textual difficulties have been resolved without recourse to emendation (correction), as lost meanings of words have been rediscovered by the comparative study of Semitic languages. Thus a more conservative attitude prevails among Jewish scholars today in the handling of biblical texts.

Jehoshaphat – a king of Judah, son of Asa; reigned 874–850BCE. The first king of Judah to make a treaty with the Kingdom of Israel, he strengthened ties by marrying his son Jehoram to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab of Israel, according to Jewish history. He fought unsuccessfully with Ahab against Aram, and with Ahab's son Jehoram against Mesha of Moab. Jehoshaphat endeavored to revive sea-commerce, but his crafts were wrecked at Wzion-Geber (1 Kings 22:1–51). The Bible praises his piety.

Josiah (647–609BCE) – another king of Judah. Grandson of Manasseh and son of Amon, he succeeded to the throne at the age of eight. The discovery of a Book of Instruction (probably Deuteronomy, a book of the Old Testament) during repairs of the Temple in 621BCE stimulated thorough reform, which included the removal of all sanctuaries except that of Jerusalem. He was killed in a clash at Megiddo with Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt.

116 **midrash** – the finding of new meaning, in addition to the literal one, in the scriptures. Talmudic tradition has formulated certain rules to deduce such hidden and new meanings. In certain cases, the *midrash* established the law; in others, it found scriptural support for laws already accepted. The entire talmudic literature is replete with the *midrashic* exposition of verses.

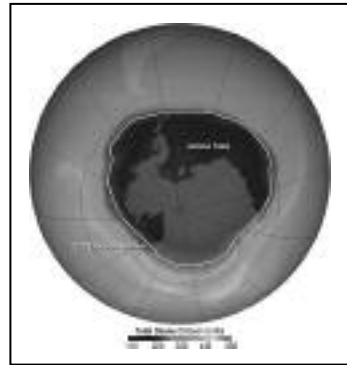
117 **Council of Nicaea** (325CE) – Christian church council held in Nicaea (now Iznik, Turkey); called by the Roman emperor Constantine I. It condemned Arianism as heretical and upheld the doctrine of the Trinity in the Nicene Creed.

118 **Jeromes** – it was in Rome, to which he returned in 382CE and where he became a kind of secretary to Pope Damasus, that he undertook, with the pope's encouragement, his translation project — a revision of the crude Old Latin version of the Bible. Over a period of 22 years, he completed the gospels of the New Testament (in Rome) and the Old Testament (in Palestine). The latter he translated from Hebrew, having become persuaded that the Hebrew text and canon, and not those of the Greek Septuagint, were the proper authorities of the Church.

119 Narrated by Ibn 'Abbās and recorded in Ibn Ishāq and al-Bayhaqī.

أخرج ابن إسحاق والبيهقي عن ابن عباس قال: قال أبو رافع القرظي حين اجتمعت الأخبار من اليهود والنصارى من أهل جبران عند رسول الله، ودعاهم إلى الإسلام: أتريد يا محمد أن نعبدك كما تعبد النصارى عيسى؟ قال: معاذ الله، فأنزل الله في ذلك: ما كان لبشر إلى قوله: بعد إذ أنتم مسلمون.

120 **Ozone (O₃)** – naturally occurring chemical in the Earth's atmosphere. Ozone forms a layer in the stratosphere, one of several layers in the Earth's atmosphere; the stratosphere is above the troposphere where most of the weather, such as rain, snow, and clouds, occurs. The ozone layer is thinnest between the tropics near the equator and gets denser toward the poles. Ozone is created when UV radiation in sunlight hits the stratosphere, causing a dissociation of the oxygen molecule (O₂) into atomic oxygen (O); the atomic oxygen (O) quickly combines with other molecular oxygen (O₂) to create ozone (O₃). At ground level, ozone is toxic; however it is indispensable in the stratosphere in that it absorbs most harmful UV radiation (wavelengths of 270–315nm), higher levels of which could lead to skin cancer and damaged vegetation.



Recorded ozone depletion since 1979 is concerned with, first, a slow, steady decline of about 4% per decade in the total volume of ozone in the Earth's stratosphere, and, second, a much larger, but seasonal, decrease in stratospheric ozone over the Earth's poles. The latter phenomenon is commonly referred to as the *ozone hole*. The ozone hole is not technically a "hole" where no ozone is present, but is actually a region of exceptionally

depleted ozone in the stratosphere over the Antarctic that happens at the beginning of the Southern Hemisphere spring (August–October). The ozone hole image shows the very low values centered over Antarctica on October 4, 2004. The columnar density of atmospheric ozone is measured in *Dobson Units (DU)*; one DU is 2.69×10^{16} ozone molecules/cm². The historical record tells us that total column ozone values of less than 220 DU were not observed prior to 1979.

Evidence that human activities affect the ozone layer has been building up over the last 30 years, ever since scientists first suggested that the release of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) into the atmosphere could reduce the amount of ozone in the stratosphere.



CFCs escape into the atmosphere from refrigeration and propellant devices and processes. In the lower atmosphere, they are so stable that they persist for years, even decades. This long lifetime allows some of the CFCs to eventually reach the stratosphere. In the stratosphere, ultraviolet light breaks the bond holding chlorine atoms (Cl) to the CFC molecule. A free chlorine atom goes on to participate in a series of chemical reactions that both destroy ozone and return the free chlorine atom to the atmosphere unchanged, where it can destroy more and more ozone molecules. The graphic shows how the size of the ozone hole, average values recorded every October, gradually expanded from 1980–1991.

According to ozone facts compiled by NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration in the US), “Under normal atmospheric conditions, the two chemicals that store most atmospheric chlorine (hydrochloric acid, and chlorine nitrate) are stable. But in the long months of polar darkness over Antarctica in the winter, atmospheric conditions are unusual. An endlessly circling whirlpool of stratospheric winds called the polar vortex isolates the air in the center. Because it is completely dark, the air in the vortex gets so cold that clouds form, even though the Antarctic air is extremely thin and dry. Chemical reactions take place that could not take place anywhere else in the atmosphere. These unusual reactions can occur only on the surface of polar stratospheric cloud particles, which may be water, ice, or nitric acid, depending on the temperature. These reactions convert the inactive chlorine reservoir chemicals into more active forms, especially chlorine gas (Cl₂). When the sunlight returns to the South Pole in October, UV light rapidly breaks the bond between the two chlorine atoms, releasing free chlorine into the stratosphere, where it takes part in reactions that destroy ozone molecules while regenerating the chlorine (known as a catalytic reaction). A catalytic reaction allows a single chlorine atom to destroy thousands of ozone molecules. Bromine is involved in a sec-

ond catalytic reaction with chlorine that contributes a large fraction of ozone loss. The ozone hole grows throughout the early spring until temperatures warm and the polar vortex weakens, ending the isolation of the air in the polar vortex. As air from the surrounding latitudes mixes into the polar region, the ozone-destroying forms of chlorine disperse. The ozone layer stabilizes until the following spring.” Experts also suggest that reducing the size of the ozone hole will exacerbate the greenhouse effect. For more information, refer to the website, <http://ozonewatch.gsfc.nasa.gov/facts/hole.html>.

121 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 284.

122 Narrated by Ibn 'Umar and recorded by Imam Aḥmad, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, and others.

قوله صلى الله عليه وسلم فيما رواه أحمد والترمذي وابن ماجه وغيرهم عن ابن عمر: «إن الله يقبل توبة العبد ما لم يغفر». .

123 Narrated by Anas ibn Mālik and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

وروى البخاري ومسلم عن أنس بن مالك أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: «يجاء بالكافر يوم القيامة. فيقال له: أرايت لو كان لك ملء الأرض ذهباً، أكنت تفتدي به؟ فيقول: نعم. فيقال له: قد كنت سئلت ما هو أيسر من ذلك» «١» .

(١) هذا لفظ البخاري. وقال مسلم بدل «قد كنت»: «كذبت. قد سئلت» وقد تقدم الحديث قريباً في تفسير الآية (٨١) .

124 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 3. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 294.

125 Narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

وفي الصحيحين: أن عمر قال: يا رسول الله، لم أصب مالا قط هو أنفوس عندي من سهمي الذي هو بخير، فما تأمرني به؟ قال: «حبس الأصل. وسبل الثمرة» .

126 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 4. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āṣir, 1411AH), p. 7.

127 On the authority of Abū Rawq and al-Kalbī.

الأولى-قولهم للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: إنك تدعي أنك على ملة إبراهيم وذريته. فكيف تستحل ما كان محرماً عندهم من الطعام كلحم الإيل؟ فنزلت الآية: كل الطعام ردا عليهم. قال أبو روق والكلبي: نزلت حين قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: إنه على ملة إبراهيم، فقالت اليهود: كيف وأنت

تأكل لحوم الإبل وألبانها. فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: «كان ذلك حلالاً لإبراهيم. فنحن نحله». فقالت اليهود: كل شيء أصبحنا اليوم نحرمه. فإنه كان على نوح وإبراهيم. حتى انتهى إلينا. فأنزله الله عز وجل تكذيباً لهم: كل الطعام ...

128 More of the “self-inflicted” dietary restrictions of the Jews can be understood by looking inside their minds on matters of food consumption. Biblical laws, interpreted in the *Oral Law*, prohibit certain foods from the Jewish diet. These comprise,

- a. meat from animals and birds biblically “unclean” or from “clean” animals and birds not ritually slaughtered or found defective in one of their vital organs; and certain parts of the “clean” beasts, such as the *helev* (abdominal fat of the cattle), the sinew (a cord or band of inelastic tissue connecting a muscle with its bony attachment) of the hip; parts cut from living animals; the blood; and meat from which the blood has not been extracted by the process of salting called *melihah*;
- b. meat and milk foods intermingled or eaten in proximity; this originates from the biblical prohibition, noted three times, of seething a kid in its mother’s milk, interpreted in detail in the Talmud and the codes; and
- c. fish that have no fins and scales.

Oral Law – from early times in Israeli history there existed a tradition of interpretation and analysis of the Written Law, and this was handed down orally from generation to generation. The importance of this Oral Law was emphasized by the belief that it was given to Moses on Sinai together with the Written Law. During the second temple period, the ancient oral tradition was upheld by the Pharisees and supported by the majority of the populace. It was not recognized by other sects — the Sadducees and the Essenes — who, however, possessed their own traditions regarding the interpretation of the Written Law. With the disappearance of these sects after the destruction of the Temple, the Pharisaic view won Israeli national acceptance, and the Oral Law was studied in the various academies. The manner of instruction differed; in some places it was taught as a commentary on the relevant section of the Written Law, in others, in a systematic and topical arrangement. Each teacher gave his own interpretation and the Sanhedrin was occasionally called upon to decide between conflicting opinions. The majority view was accepted in practice, but those rejected views continued to be taught theoretically. In time, individuals privately recorded parts of the Oral Law which they feared might be forgotten. A complete outline, known as the *Mishnah*, apparently incorporating earlier versions, was compiled by Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi and became the basis for study. The discussion of these laws, however, remained oral and was only recorded several centuries later as the Talmud (Gemara). After the redaction of the Talmud, study centered around the written text, still known as the Oral Law because its roots were

still in the oral tradition. During the Gaonic Period, the Karaites rejected the Oral Law and denied the validity of the Talmud.

- 129 Various explanations have, however, been advanced from time to time. The motives, however, of the dietary laws have been traditionally interpreted as (1) holiness, as a regulating principle in everyday life; (2) as a means of preventing the Jews from close and intimate association with heathens; and (3) as a lesson in self-discipline. Hygienic and folklore-related reasons have also been suggested. Wine known or suspected to have been touched by an idolater is also forbidden for use. These laws are not regarded as binding by Reform Jews.

Reform Judaism – a religious movement maintaining that to meet contemporary exigencies, modifications have to be introduced in traditional Jewish thought and practices. Reacting to the Napoleonic Emancipation, the Reform Jewish movement began in Germany with the formation of small synagogues by laymen such as Israel Jacobson who shortened the service, introduced the vernacular, utilized an organ, made the vernacular sermon a regular feature, and instituted the ceremony of group-confirmation. Early German Reform rabbis tended to be extreme in their practices and opinions seeking, at a succession of Rabbinical Conferences, to break with the tenets which characterized European Judaism of their day. Men like Samuel Holdheim and Abraham Geiger advocated drastic changes in practice and a complete severance from talmudic restrictions.

The first congregation in the US to adopt Reform was Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina in the early part of the 19th century, but the movement received its major impetus in the US through the efforts of Isaac Mayer Wise who founded the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1873), the Hebrew Union College (1875), and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1889). Each of these agencies was the first of its kind in the US. Reform Judaism maintains that “the externals of Judaism may be altered to strengthen its internals.” It declares that historic Judaism continuously adapted itself to its environment in order to strengthen its impact upon society, and modern Judaism should make similar modifications to correspond to the current situation. Reform abandoned the doctrine that it is Jewish destiny to be miraculously transported by the Messiah to the Holy Land, there to have the entire levitical and temple apparatus recreated for him. In its recoil against this belief in the personal Messiah (for which it substituted the belief in a messianic age), early Reform turned against Zionism. Later, however, its attitude toward Zionism changed radically and it is now part of the Zionist movement.

Reform Judaism maintains that it is the mission of the Jew to spiritualize mankind. Hence, those customs designed to separate the Jew from his neigh-

bor may be surrendered. Without altering its feeling that there are deep theological gulfs separating Judaism from Christianity, Reform Judaism nonetheless declares anachronistic such differentiatory practices as covering the head at worship, the dietary laws, the use of the phylacteries (charms, amulets), etc. Reform has not eliminated ceremonialism, but holds that all practices should be meaningful and aesthetic. In the not so distant past, there has been an increasing tendency to reintroduce traditional ceremonies although its acceptance of patrilineal descent has widened its gap with other Jewish trends. Reform synagogues exist in 26 or more countries. In America it is now one of the largest, if not the largest, trend with over 1,250,000 adherents. The movement is affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

130 Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Volume 4. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āšir, 1411AH), p. 13.

131 Ibid.

132 **The Siege of Makkah and Juhayman al-'Utaybī** (1936–1980) – refer to endnote 48 in this volume.

133 Zafar Bangash, *The Makkah Massacre and the Future of the Haramain*. (Markham, Ontario, Canada: The Open Press, Ltd, 1988).

Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and quoted by Dr. Wahbah al-Zuhaylī in Volume 4 of *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdahī wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*.

فكان لضرورة تطهيره من الشرك. ولأجل أن يعبد الله وحده. واستحل ساعة من نهار لم يخل لأحد بعد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم. ثم أعلن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم كما جاء في السيرة: «من دخل المسجد فهو آمن. ومن دخل داره فهو آمن. ومن دخل دار أبي سفيان فهو آمن».

Al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī (40–95AH) – particularly cruel and heavy-handed governor of al-Kūfah, 75–95AH, during the reigns of Umayyad monarchs, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān and his son al-Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik. As governor, he greeted the people of al-Kūfah by saying, “I see plenty of heads that are ripe for the picking.” Before becoming the governor of al-Kūfah, he had already acquired a notorious reputation from his campaign against 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr, in which he bombarded Makkah with catapults, targeting al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and the pilgrims inside during the Hajj.

134 Narrated by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and recorded by al-Tirmidhī.

من ملك زادا وراحلة تبلغه إلى بيت الله ولم يحج فلا عليه أن يموت يهوديا أو نصرانيا وذلك أن الله يقول في كتابه: (ولله على الناس حج البيت من استطاع إليه سبيلا)

135 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, Volume 1. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 435.

136 On the authority of al-Bukhārī and Muslim by way of Ibn 'Abbās.

حديث ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما: قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يوم فتح مكة: «إن هذا البلد حرمه الله يوم خلق السماوات والأرض. فهو حرام بحرمة الله إلى يوم القيامة. وإن لم يحل القتال فيه لأحد قبلي. ولم يحل لي إلا في ساعة من نهار: فهو حرام بحرمة الله إلى يوم القيامة. لا يعضد شوكه. ولا ينفر صيده. ولا تلتقط لقطته: إلا من عرقها. ولا يختلى خلاه.. إلخ».

137 Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, Volume 1. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Shurūq, 1405AH), 11th ed., p. 193.

138 Narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and recorded in the Sunan of Ibn Ḥabbān and al-Bayhaqī.

أخرجه ابن حبان في صحيحة والبيهقي عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه: أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: «يقول الله عز وجل: إن عبدا صححت له جسمه. ووسعت عليه في المعيشة. تمضي عليه خمسة أعوام لا ينفذ إلى الحرم»

139 Narrated by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and recorded by al-Ḥākim and al-Bayhaqī.

«حجوا قبل أن لا تحجوا»

140 Narrated by Ibn 'Abbās and recorded in the Sunan of Aḥmad ibn Hanbal and al-Aṣbahānī.

«تعجلوا إلى الحج- يعني الفريضة- فإن أحدكم لا يدري ما يعرض له»

141 Narrated by Abū Umāmah and recorded by Sa'īd ibn Mansūr, Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, Abū Ya'lā, and al-Bayhaqī.

«من لم يحبس مرض أو حاجة ظاهرة أو مشقة ظاهرة أو سلطان جائر. فلم يحج. فليمت إن شاء يهوديا. وإن شاء نصرانيا»

142 Narrated by al-Tirmidhī.

ورواية الترمذي المتقدمة: «من ملك زادا أو راحلة تبلغه إلى بيت الله. ولم يحج. فلا عليه أن يموت يهوديا أو نصرانيا. وذلك لأن الله تعالى قال في كتابه: ولله على الناس حج البيت من استطاع إليه سبيلا [آل عمران 97/3]»

143 Narrated by Ibn 'Amr and recorded in the Sunan of Imam Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, and others.

قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فيما رواه أحمد وأبو داود وغيرهما عن ابن عمر: «كفى المرء إثما أن يضيع من يقوت».

144 Narrated by Ibn 'Umar and recorded by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

لقوله صلى الله عليه وسلم في الصحيحين عن ابن عمر: «لا يحل لامرأة تؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر أن تسافر فوق ثلاث إلا مع ذي رحم محرم أو زوج»

145 Narrated by Ibn 'Abbās and others in almost all books of hadith.

حديث ابن عباس وغيره الذي رواه الجماعة: «أن المرأة من خثعم، قالت: يا رسول الله، إن أبي أدركته فريضة الله في الحج شيخاً كبيراً، لا يستطيع أن يستوي على ظهره؟ قال: فحجني عنه» وكان ذلك الإذن في حجة الوداع. وجاء في رواية: «لا يستطيع أن يستوي على ظهره بغيره». فقال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: «فحجني عنه، أ رأيت لو كان على أبيك دين أكنت قاضيته؟» قالت: نعم. قال: «فدين الله أحق أن يقضى»

146 **National Mall** – an area in Washington, DC, the capital of the United States, that is between the Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Hill; where all the elites of Washington have their governmental and business offices.

Capitol Hill – where American lawmakers in the US Congress — the House of Representatives and the Senate — hold session.

Washington Monument – a memorial in the center of the National Mall dedicated to the first president of the United States, George Washington (1732–1799).

Lincoln Memorial – another monument on the west side of the National Mall, this one dedicated to the US Civil War (1861–1865) president, Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865).

147 Ms. Johnson, then president of the Association of American Atheists, also said, “We still need to keep marching and protesting... I’m asking you today to work with [the] Godless Americans Political Action Committee. Some of you came thousands of miles to be here. You care about the separation of church and state.” She encouraged the group to become more politically active. “We are on the move to becoming a well-oiled machine who knows how to play the game,” Ms. Johnson continued. Demonstrators who were not near the stage watched the speeches on a large screen. Some had autumn picnics with them. “There was no evidence, no proof of God. Every time I asked, they would say, ‘It’s felt in the heart.’ It’s pretty evident that it was made up,” she exclaimed.

Denise Barnes, *Nonbelievers march on Mall: 2,000 demand separation between politics and religion*. (Washington, DC: Washington Times, News section, November 3, 2002).

148 **Imam Khomeini** (1902–1989) – refer to endnote 232 in Volume 2.

Osama bin Laden (born 1957) – leader of al-Qaeda; considered — by the US, Israel, and the rest of the imperialist/Zionist establishment — to be the world’s foremost terrorist, and by others — mostly zealous Muslims and anti-imperialist resistance forces — as a hero; accused of multiple incidents includ-

ing among others the bombing of the USS Cole, the US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and of course 9/11, though he has not been formally charged for 9/11 because of “a lack of evidence.” One of the heirs of the Bin Laden construction family fortune in Saudi Arabia, he was immediately recruited in 1979 by then head of Saudi intelligence, Prince Turkī ibn Fayṣal Āl Sa‘ūd (generally written in English as Prince Turki al-Faisal), right after graduating from the King Abdulaziz University with an undergraduate degree in finance and business administration. His first mission was to go to Afghanistan and keep track of Saudi financial and US military aid flowing to the Afghan *mujāhidīn*, who were resisting Soviet occupation of their country. Through the agency of Pakistani intelligence and by direct contact with the Afghan resistance fighters, he was able to find out who was getting the aid, how much each party was getting, and where they were based. He kept all of this information in a database, which he simply called *al-qā‘idah* (Arabic for *database*) — later to become known as the organization, al-Qaeda.



By 1984, he was funneling large amounts of cash, arms, and *mujāhidīs* from all over the Arab world to what he thought was a jihad campaign against the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan (in fact, Afghanistan was a staging area for a US proxy war against the Soviets with the objective of draining the USSR financially, leading to its ultimate collapse as a rival to US power in the world). It is said that he even used his own wealth to buy tickets, accommodations, and papers for the foreign fighters; and he is also said to have set up training facilities where the young men would learn combat, the use of automatic weapons, how to make and plant explosives, and gain tactical experience. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait the following year, Bin Laden offered the Saudi monarchy the use of his services along with the “army” of *mujāhidīs* he had recruited during the Afghan war against the Russians. He argued that the combination of his forces and the Saudi military was sufficient to repel Saddam and there was no need to bring any non-Muslims into the picture; however his offer was refused and the Saudi autocrats decided to entrust the safety of the kingdom to the Americans. When American troops touched down on Saudi soil, Bin Laden publicly denounced the Saudi government for allowing *mushriks* into the land of the holy precincts. When their attempts to silence him failed, the Saudi royals ultimately exiled him to Sudan in 1992.

By 1994, while in Sudan he became closely associated with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and Ayman al-Zawāhirī. During his time in Sudan, he sent trained Muslim fighters to Islamic resistance movements across the globe, including Algeria and Bosnia, but surprisingly not to Palestine. In 1995, the

Sudanese minister of defense, Fatih Erwa, claims that he offered to turn Bin Laden over to the Americans, but he says they refused; instead in 1996, they along with Egypt and Saudi Arabia pressured the Sudanese government to expel Bin Laden, who was sent in a chartered flight to Jalalabad, Afghanistan. He stayed there until shortly before 9/11, when he was in Dubai, being treated for kidney disease; on this occasion, he was apparently met by a CIA operative.

The earliest of Bin Laden's recorded statements after 9/11 suggest that he was not involved in the crime. In a statement issued to al-Jazeera on 9-17-2001 (<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/16/inv.binladen.denial/>), he said, "The U.S. government has consistently blamed me for being behind every occasion its enemies attack it. I would like to assure the world that I did not plan the recent attacks, which seem to have been planned by people for personal reasons. I have been living in the Islamic emirate of Afghanistan and following its leaders' rules. The current leader does not allow me to exercise such operations." In an interview with the Karachi-based *Ummat* newspaper on 9-28-2001 (<http://www.public-action.com/911/oblintrv.html>), Bin Laden said, "I have already said that I am not involved in the 11 September attacks in the United States. As a Muslim, I try my best to avoid telling a lie. I had no [fore]knowledge of these attacks, nor do I consider the killing of innocent women, children and other humans as an appreciable act. Islam strictly forbids causing harm to innocent women, children and other people. Such a practice is forbidden even in the course of a battle. It is the United States, which is perpetrating every maltreatment on women, children and common people . . ." These statements were either suppressed or summarily dismissed by the US media and public officials, including President George W. Bush, who spent their time looking for a smoking gun, and ultimately "discovered" it a month later in the infamous video where Bin Laden was allegedly claiming responsibility for the attacks. Bin Laden probably passed away due to kidney failure in late-2001 or early-2002.

The Taliban offered to hand over Bin Laden to the United States to stand trial before and during the initial US bombing campaign of Afghanistan in October 2001; however the Taliban insisted on evidence of his guilt before agreeing to an extradition (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/oct/14/afghanistan.terrorism5>). The US to this day has not provided credible evidence to this effect, and the FBI has not indicted Bin Laden for the crime because they do not have enough evidence. Convincing evidence from the 9/11 Truth Movement in the United States, particularly Dr. David Ray Griffin, suggests that the "Bin Laden" in all the videotapes after 2002 is an imposter, a fake, and a stand-in (*Osama Bin Laden: Dead or Alive?* by David Ray Griffin).

All of this lends credence to the assertion that even if there was a paramilitary organization known as al-Qaeda, it was thoroughly infiltrated by the

CIA during the early-1980s. A more likely explanation is that al-Qaeda is just a fiction created by US intelligence in the post-Soviet era, and that it is a myth perpetuated to rationalize interventionist policies in the Islamic East in order to secure vital resources and guarantee the security of Israel. Italian and British intelligence have repeatedly confirmed this fact in addition to many other writers (<http://polidics.com/cia/top-ranking-cia-operatives-admit-al-qaeda-is-a-complete-fabrication.html>); one of them is Professor Michel Chossudovsky who asserts that al-Qaeda has always been a US intelligence asset. He goes into detail about the long-standing US relationship with the organization in his book, *America's "War on Terrorism" in the Wake of 9/11*, and in the article, *Al Qaeda and the "War on Terrorism"* (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=7718>).

149 In a ruling that may incite other hate-mongers, the Paris court threw out the case brought by officials from the main mosques in Paris and the central-eastern city of Lyon, and other Muslim groups after an interview Houellebecq gave to the French literary magazine *Lire*. In practice, the French court acquitted (cleared) best-selling French author Michel Houellebecq of charges of racial insult and inciting racial hatred for calling Islam the "dumbest religion." While the court ruled that the 44-year-old author's comments were "without a doubt characterized by neither a particularly noble outlook nor by the subtlety of their phrasing," they did not constitute a punishable offense. While Houellebecq indeed had expressed hatred for Islam as a religion, the court said, he had not expressed hatred for Muslims. This is how the "high society" of Ahl-al-Kitab operate.

Diana West, *Speaking Jihad: Just what is free speech?* (Washington, DC: Washington Times, News section, October 25, 2002).

Another notorious example is that of Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, who was criticized by French human-rights groups for inciting racial hatred by saying in her book *The Rage and the Pride* that Muslims "multiply like rats," and "spend their time with their bottoms in the air, praying five times a day." The same Ms. Fallaci puts it this way, "The hate for the West swells like a fire fed by the wind. The clash between us and them is not a military one. It is a cultural one, a religious one, and the worst is still to come." Tight security was in place for her speech at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC.

Miss Fallaci contends in the angry polemic that the only difference between "moderate Islam" and "radical Islam" is the length of the Muslims' beards. *The Rage and the Pride*, first published in an Italian newspaper and then as a book, sold more than one million copies in Italy and was also pop-

ular in Germany and France. Ms. Fallaci, in her first book in more than 10 years, said she was prompted to write by demonstrations throughout the Muslim world and in pockets of Europe “celebrating” the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Her ire, based on years of reporting in Muslim countries, is evident. Those who disagree with her call the work an incitement to kill Muslims. Unrepentant, Fallaci calls the destruction of the Twin Towers an act of cultural war and says the superior Western civilization must stand up and defeat Islam, “War you wanted, war you want? Good. As far as I am concerned, war it is and war it will be. Until the last breath.”

Tom Carter, *Italian author slams Islam's 'hate' for West*. (Washington, DC: Washington Times, News section, October 23, 2002).

Salman Rushdie – refer to endnote 96 in Volume 1.

- 150 Flemming Rose, *Muhammeds ansigt [The face of Muhammad]*. (Viby, Denmark: Jyllands-Posten newspaper, September 30, 2005).
- 151 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm (better known as Tafsīr al-Manār)*, Volume 4. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Ma'rifaḥ, 1414AH), pp. 15–16.
- 152 Narrated by Zayd ibn Aslam and recorded in the works of al-Wāḥidī, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Shawkānī.

مر شاس بن قيس وكان شيخا قد عسا في الجاهلية عظيم الكفر شديد الطعن على المسلمين شديد الحسد لهم على نفر من أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من الأوس والخزرج في مجلس قد جمعهم يتحدثون فيه فغاظه ما رأى من ألفتهم وجماعتهم وصلاح ذات بينهم على الإسلام بعد الذي كان بينهم من العداوة في الجاهلية فقال قد اجتمع ملأ بني قبيلة بهذه البلاد والله ما لنا معهم إذا اجتمع ملؤهم بها من قرار فأمر فتى شابا معه من يهود فقال اعمد إليهم فاجلس معهم ثم ذكركم يوم بعثت وما كان قبله وأنشدكم بعض ما كانوا يتقاولون فيه من الأشعار وكان يوم بعثت يوما اقتتلت فيه الأوس والخزرج وكان الظفر فيه للأوس على الخزرج ففعل فتكلم القوم عند ذلك وتنازعوا وتفاخروا حتى توائب رجالان من الحيين على الركب أوس بن قبيظي أحد بني حارثة من الأوس وجبار بن صخر أحد بني سلمة من الخزرج فتقاولا ثم قال أحدهما لصاحبه إن شئت من الله رددناها الآن جدعة وغضب الفريقان جميعا وقالوا قد فعلنا السلاح السلاح موعدكم الظاهرة والظاهرة الحرة فخرجوا إليها وانضمت الأوس بعضها إلى بعض والخزرج بعضها إلى بعض على دعواهم التي كانوا عليها في الجاهلية فبلغ ذلك رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فخرج إليهم فيمن معه من المهاجرين من أصحابه حتى جاءهم فقال يا معشر المسلمين الله الله أبعوى الجاهلية وأنا بين أظهركم بعد إذ هداكم الله إلى الإسلام وأكرمكم به وقطع به عنكم أمر الجاهلية واستنقذكم به من الكفر وألف به بينكم ترجعون إلى ما كنتم عليه كفارا فعرف القوم أنها نزعة من الشيطان وكيد من عدوهم لهم فآلقوا السلاح من أيديهم وبكوا وعانق الرجال بعضهم بعضا ثم انصرفوا مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم سامعين مطيعين قد أطفأ الله عنهم كيد عدو الله شاس وأنزله الله في شأن شاس بن قيس وما صنع (قل يا أهل الكتاب لم تكفرون بآيات الله والله شهيد على ما تعملون) إلى قوله (وما الله بغافل عما تعملون) وأنزله في أوس بن قبيظي وجبار بن صخر ومن كان معهما من قومهما الذين صنعوا ما صنعوا (يا أيها الذين آمنوا إن تطيعوا فريقا من الذين أوتوا الكتاب) إلى قوله (وأولئك لهم عذاب عظيم)

153 Can any Muslim equate the “royalty” of Saudi Arabia with the equality of Muslims in the first generations of this divine mission on earth? When the late King Fahd departed a Swiss clinic where he was receiving treatment in 2001, it was reported that no less than 12 large jet planes, including a hospital jumbo, were required to move him and his retinue to one of his summer palaces in Marbella, Spain. Local shopkeepers and businessmen were jubilant; Marbella’s chamber of commerce estimated that the royal house of Saud dropped 80 million dollars a week on hotels and designer knickknacks. These sinful custodians of the two Ḥarams have funds equivalent to almost half the annual American national deficit deposited in American banks. But despite all the cash deposited by the Saudi decision-makers in *mushrik* banks, in defiance of every word and letter of the Qur’an, words of ingratitude coming from *kitābis* are constantly hurled at the Saudis, accusing them of being “soft on extremism” and “no friend of the US.” Saudi Arabia in some quarters in America is being referred to as an adversary, and in others as an enemy. It was even said that Saudi Arabia is “a kernel of evil,” involved at every level of the transnational terrorist food chain. The threat has explicitly been made that unless the Saudis clean up their act, the US should consider moving in militarily and taking over the Saudi oil fields.

Fahd ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Sa‘ūd (1921–2005) – refer to endnote 59 in Volume 2.

Marbella, Spain – a port and tourist resort on the Costa del Sol between Malaga and Algeciras in Andalucia, South Spain; population (in 1991) of 80,645. There are three bullrings, a castle that once belonged to the Muslims of al-Andalus, and the remains of a wall that may have been used by Muslims in the past to defend themselves.

154 The text of the entire letter, reproduced below, can be found at: Prince Turki al-Faisal, *Allied Against Terrorism*. (Washington, DC: Washington Post, Editorial (A) section, September 17, 2002), p. A21.

“In September 1973 I was appointed to Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Liaison Bureau, which was mandated to work with friendly intelligence agencies, including the CIA. From that year until Aug. 31, 2001, when I stepped down as director of the General Intelligence Department (GID), I was at the forefront of my government’s war on terrorism.

“In the 1970s and 80s, the CIA and GID [General Intelligence Department] worked together to combat communist-inspired terrorist organizations around the world. We shared information on Abu Nidal and the various Palestinian groups, as well as the Red Brigades in Italy, the Baader-Meinhof Gang in Germany, the Japanese Red Army, and many others that

threatened US-Saudi interests. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the US and Saudi governments entered into a joint covert program with Pakistan to help the Afghan people resist the invaders.

“In my years at the GID, I experienced firsthand many times of difficulty between our countries. During these periods, the United States and Saudi Arabia maintained close ties and discussed our differences frankly and openly. We often agreed to disagree, but we always recognized the mutual benefits of partnership. I also experienced the high points in the relationship — for example, the disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel and Syria and Israel in 1975 and 1976; neither would have taken place without Saudi-US cooperation. Nor would the increase in Saudi oil production in the mid-80s (which led to lower oil prices and set the stage for a period of extended global prosperity), the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon in 1982 or the Saudi contribution to the fight against the contras in Nicaragua. And in the 90s, Saudi-American collaboration was instrumental in liberating Kuwait and laying the groundwork for the subsequent Madrid Conference, which brought Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians together to seek a permanent peace settlement for the first time.

“Then came September 11. Without doubt that crime stands in history as one of the most heinous and dastardly ever. The perpetrators of that horrible act — 15 of whom were from Saudi Arabia — shocked and saddened the average Saudi citizen. The condemnation from my leadership was immediate and comprehensive. As a country that has suffered at the hands of terrorists for the past 40 years, we understood some of the sorrow and anguish Americans felt that day. For me, it was an especially calamitous event, as I had devoted all of my working life to combating such crimes. It also brought back the pain and outrage I felt when my father, the late King Faisal, was killed in a terrorist attack.

“As director of general intelligence, I had for some time regarded Osama bin Laden as a key intelligence target. When he embraced terrorism in 1994, my government took the unprecedented step of stripping him of his Saudi citizenship. In 1996 the president of Sudan offered to hand him over to the kingdom if we agreed not to prosecute him. We turned down that offer; we wanted Bin Laden to face trial. Around this time, at the instruction of the senior Saudi leadership, I shared all the intelligence we had collected on Bin Laden and al-Qaeda with the CIA. And in 1997 the Saudi minister of defense, Prince Sultan, established a joint intelligence committee with the United States to share information on terrorism in general and on Bin Laden (and al-Qaeda) in particular.

“A year after Sept. 11, [you can] look upon my country and see many changes. First, extremism is widely condemned. Even many of our most radical citizens have begun to advocate moderation. And our leadership — both the secular and religious authorities — has vocally admonished those

who continue to support extremist ideas. Reforms are proceeding. Our press is increasingly open. There is frank criticism in our media of the government and social problems. In addition, our legal system is being reformed, and full legal representation of the accused has become mandatory. Police must now follow strict judicial procedures in issuing warrants, holding suspects and informing the next of kin when a suspect is held for questioning. Also, a top-level committee has been charged with reviewing and reforming our educational system. Private universities can now be established, in competition with government-sponsored education.

“We have begun to issue identity cards to women, in recognition of their rights under Islamic law. These include the freedom to conduct financial transactions and establish businesses, among other things. In addition, women’s education has been transferred from the religious authorities to the Ministry of Education, the same department that is responsible for the education of men. All these developments, and others that I have not mentioned, have followed from Sept. 11. Many were underway before that day, but the horrific images of 9/11, and the threat that terrorism represents to all civilized peoples, accelerated our process of self-reflection and change.

“Saudi Arabia has worked with the United States for the past 70 years. Both countries have benefitted from this enduring partnership. Remember that we face the same threat: Bin Laden targeted Saudi Arabia before he targeted America. Al-Qaeda has thousands of followers from more than 60 countries, including those of many US allies. That he chose 15 Saudis for his murderous gang, many of whom, he boasted, did not even know the ultimate goal of their mission, can only be explained as an attempt to disrupt the close relationship between our two countries.

“There are those in America who condemn all Saudi Arabians as uncivilized, close-minded and barbaric. But such blanket accusations are not worthy of the American people. Let us refuse extremists the victory of undermining our partnership. Instead, let us remain strong, and, whatever shortcomings we see in each other, let us confront them and overcome them in a spirit of mutual respect and openness.”

Ṣabrī al-Bannā (1937–2002) – Palestinian dissident, better known as Abu Nidal (Abū Niḍāl). Born into a prosperous, plantation-owning family in Yaffa, Bannā and his family fled to al-Burayj refugee camp in the Gaza Strip after the usurpation of Palestine in 1948. Later, they moved to the West Bank city of Nablus. While working as an electrician’s assistant, Bannā joined the Ba’ath Party of Jordan in 1955. Following the failed coup in 1957 against the regime of King Hussein, the Ba’ath Party was suppressed. Bannā moved to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he established an electrical



business and joined a secret Fatah cell. In 1967 he was expelled from Saudi Arabia after joining in a demonstration following the Arabian governments' defeat in the June 1967 war.

His trading company in Amman became a useful conduit for Fatah. In 1969, when he was a member of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, Bannā was appointed Fatah's representative in Sudan. In July 1970 he was transferred to Baghdad as Fatah's envoy. There he began to echo the views of the Iraqi regime rather than to represent Fatah's interests. Soon he started to work for the Iraqi secret service. Following his criticism of the decision of the Palestine National Congress in mid-1974 to set up a "national authority" on any "liberated" territory in Palestine, Bannā was expelled from Fatah. In November he was found guilty by a Fatah court, based in Beirut, of plotting to kill a Fatah leader, Maḥmūd 'Abbās (*nom de guerre*: Abū Māzin), and was sentenced to death in absentia.

He subsequently set up his own group, *Fatah: The Revolutionary Council*. The group was generously funded by Iraq, using it to settle scores with Syria in 1976–1977. Bannā's activities from Baghdad ended in 1983 when, in order to qualify for aid from Washington for the Iraq-imposed war on Iran, Iraqi president Saddam Hussein expelled him and his men to show that Iraq was distancing itself from international terrorism.

Bannā was then hired by Syria, which used his group as part of its coercive attempt to dissuade King Hussein of Jordan from making a unilateral deal with Israel. When King Hussein and Yasser 'Arafāt, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), devised a joint plan in early 1985, Bannā joined with Abū Mūsá, another Syrian-backed Fatah dissident, to destroy the accord and prevent any prospect of an agreement between Hussein, 'Arafāt, and Israel. In late-1985 Bannā's gunmen attacked counters of the Israeli El Al airline in Vienna and Rome, and hijacked a Pan-American aircraft on the ground in Karachi. In mid-1986 Syria expelled Bannā and his group from Damascus. They reportedly took refuge in Libya.

Once the "Iraq-Iran" war came to an end in 1988, freeing Iraq from the need to placate the US, Bannā turned successfully to Baghdad for assistance. In 1990 he tried to wrest control of the Fatah-dominated Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, but failed. During the Gulf Crisis (August, 1990 to March, 1991), Bannā was allegedly bribed by the Saudi authorities to stay in their country and refrain from carrying out assassinations and sabotage for Iraq. However, it is said that in Tunis in January 1991, Bannā's agent, working as a bodyguard, assassinated Ṣalāḥ Khalaf, the PLO's second in command.

Ṣabrī al-Bannā died in August 2002 at his residence in Baghdad of multiple gunshot wounds thought to have come from Iraqi agents.

Red Brigades (Brigate rosse) – far left-wing guerrilla groups active in Italy during the 1970s and early-1980s. They were implicated in many kidnappings

and killings, some later attributed to right-wing agents provocateurs, including that of Christian Democrat leader Aldo Moro in 1978.

Baader-Meinhof Gang – popular name for the West German left-wing guerilla group the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (*Red Army Faction*), active from 1968 against what it perceived as US imperialism. The three main founding members were Andreas Baader (1943–1977), Gudrun Ensslin (1940–1977), and Ulrike Meinhof (1934–1976). The group claimed responsibility in 1990 for the murder of Detleve Rohwedder, the government agent responsible for selling off state-owned companies of the former East German regime. A former student activist, Baader was sentenced to life imprisonment in April 1977; he took his own life in October, following the failure of the Faction's hostage swap attempt at Mogadishu airport.

155 Narrated by Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh and recorded by Abū Ya'lá, Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, and al-Bazār.

حديث جابر بن عبد الله رضي الله عنه: قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «لا تسألوا أهل الكتاب عن شيء: فإنهم لن يهدوكم وقد ضلوا. وإنكم إما أن تصدقوا بباطل. وإما أن تكذبوا بحق. وإنه والله: لو كان موسى حياً بين أظهركم: ما حل له إلا أن يتبعني».

156 **Wall Street** – the financial center of the US on lower Manhattan Island in New York City. It is often synonymous with the New York Stock Exchange, which is housed there. The street was so named because of a stockade erected by the Dutch in 1653.

Silicon Valley – nickname given to Santa Clara County, California; since the 1950s the site of many high-technology electronic firms, whose prosperity is based on the silicon chip — an integrated circuit with microscopically small electrical components on a piece of silicon crystal only a few millimeters square. One chip may contain more than a million components. A chip is mounted in a rectangular plastic package and linked via gold wires to metal pins, so that it can be connected to a printed circuit board for use in electronic devices, such as computers, calculators, television sets, car dashboards, and domestic appliances. In 1991 IBM launched the world's fastest high-capacity memory computer chip. SRAM (static random-access memory) can send or receive 8 billion bits of information per second. It “reads” and “writes” data to its circuits at the same time, instead of in separate processes as other chips do. SRAM was replaced by the faster SDRAM (synchronous dynamic random-access memory) chip, introduced by Samsung in 1993. An SDRAM chip has a more complex pattern of operation and can accept a new instruction before it has finished processing the previous one. In 1971, Intel introduced the first single chip microprocessor,

the Intel 4004. Today's microprocessors, though much faster than the original, are still based on a similar design.

157 Narrated in Sunan al-Tirmidhī.

لقوله صلى الله عليه وسلم: فيما أخرجه الترمذي: «القرآن: حبل الله المتين، ونوره المبين، لا تنقضي عجائبه، ولا تفسى غرائبه، ولا يخلق على كثرة الرد. من قال به صدق، ومن حكم به عدل، ومن عمل به رشد، ومن اعتصم به، هدى إلى صراط مستقيم».

158 Narrated by al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr through Imams Muslim and Aḥmad.

روى مسلم وأحمد حديثاً معروفاً عن النعمان بن بشير هو: «مثل المؤمن في توادهم وتراحمهم وتعاطفهم، مثل الجسد إذا اشتكى منه عضو، تداعى له سائر الجسد بالحمل والسهر».

159 Narrated by Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī and recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nisā'ī.

وروى البخاري ومسلم والترمذي والنسائي عن أبي موسى الأشعري: «المؤمن للمؤمن كالبنيان يشد بعضه بعضاً».

160 Narrated by Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān and recorded by Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, al-Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah.

وروى أحمد والترمذي وابن ماجه عن حذيفة بن اليمان رضي الله عنه أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: «والذي نفسي بيده لتأمرن بالمعروف، ولتنهون عن المنكر، أو ليوشكن الله أن يبعث عليكم، عقاباً من عنده، ثم لتدعنه فلا يستجيب لكم».

161 **Valéry Giscard d'Estaing** (1926–present) – French conservative politician; president of France 1974–1981. He was finance minister to de Gaulle from 1962–1966 and to Pompidou from 1969–1974. As leader of the Union pour la Democratie Francaise, which he formed in 1978, d'Estaing sought to project himself as leader of a “new center.” D'Estaing was active in the wartime resistance during WWII. After a distinguished academic career, he worked in the Ministry of Finance and entered the National Assembly for Puy de Dome in 1956 as an Independent Republican. After President Pompidou's death he was narrowly elected president in 1974, in difficult economic circumstances, but seven years later he was defeated by the socialist Mitterrand in 1981. He returned to the National Assembly in 1984. In 1989 he resigned from the National Assembly to play a leading role in the European Parliament.



162 Keith B. Richburg, *Giscard Declares Turkey Too 'Different' to Join EU*.

(Washington, DC: Washington Post, News (A) section, November 9, 2002), p. A22.

163 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) –

an organization established by a treaty signed in 1949 by Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the UK, and the USA; Greece and Turkey acceded in 1952, West Germany in 1955, and Spain in 1982. NATO was established as a military



alliance to defend Western Europe against Soviet aggression. The treaty commits the members to treat an armed attack on one of them as an attack on all of them, and for all to assist the country attacked by such actions as are deemed necessary. The alliance forces are based on contributions from the member countries' armed services and operate under a multi-national command. The treaty allows for the deployment of nuclear, as well as conventional, weapons. Its institutions include a Council, an International Secretariat, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE), and various committees to formulate common policies. In the 1970s and 1980s, NATO policy of a first-strike nuclear attack to fend off a Soviet conventional attack became controversial in Western Europe, where many thought it increased the possibility of nuclear war. In 1966 France under de Gaulle withdrew all its forces from NATO command, but it remains a member. After the 1989 changes in Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a NATO summit in London (1990) began the process of redefining NATO's military and political goals. Since then NATO has taken in all its prior "enemies" in Eastern Europe, and the way things are going it may become the next power structure to take on Islamic self-determination.

Council of Europe – body constituted in 1949 in Strasbourg, France (still its headquarters), to secure "a greater measure of unity between the European countries." The widest association of European states, it has a Committee of foreign ministers, a Parliamentary Assembly (with members from national parliaments), and a European Commission investi-



gating violations of human rights. The first session of the Consultative Assembly opened in 1949, the members then being the UK, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg, Greece and Turkey; Iceland, Germany, Austria, Cyprus, Switzerland, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Liechtenstein, Finland, and San Marino joined subsequently. With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the Council acquired a new role in assisting the establishment of Western-style democratic and accountable political systems in the region, and several countries applied for membership. Hungary joined in 1990, and

Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1991; Romania and Yugoslavia applied for membership in 1991 and Albania for observer status.

164 **kike** – slang (disparaging and offensive) or pejorative for a person of Jewish religion or descent.

nigger – disparaging and offensive term for “a black person,” a member of any dark-skinned people, or a member of a group of persons of disadvantaged social standing; second class or lower class citizen.

165 **Treaty of Westphalia** (1648) – an agreement that ended the Thirty Years War in 1648. The peace marked the end of the supremacy of the Holy Roman Empire and the emergence of France as a dominant power in Europe. It recognized the sovereignty of the German states, Switzerland, and the Netherlands; Lutherans, Calvinists, and Roman Catholics were given equal rights.

166 Narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and Abū Hurayrah; and transmitted by Imam Muslim.

في صحيح مسلم عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «من رأى منكم منكرا فليغيره بيده. فإن لم يستطع فبلسانه. فإن لم يستطع فبقلبه. وذلك أضعف الإيمان»

167 Narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and recorded in the Sunan of Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

لما وقعت بنو إسرائيل في المعاصي نهتهم علماءؤهم فلم ينتهوا . فجالسوهم في مجالسهم . واكلوهم . وشاربوهم . فضرب الله قلوب بعضهم ببعض . ولعنهم على لسان داود وعيسى بن مريم (وذلك بما عصوا وكانوا يعتدون) [المائدة: ٧٨] وكان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم متكئا فجلس فقال: لا والذي نفسي بيده حتى تأطروهم على الحق أطرا (وفي رواية) ثم يلقاها من الغد وهو على حاله فلا يمنعه ذلك . أن يكون أكبله وشريبه وقعيده . فلما فعلوا ذلك ضرب الله قلوب بعضهم ببعض . ثم قال: (لعن الذين كفروا من بني إسرائيل على لسان داود إلی قوله فاسقون) [المائدة : ٧٨ - ٨١] ثم قال: كلا والله لتأمرن بالمعروف ولتنهون عن المنكر ولتأخذن على يد الظالم ولتأطرنه على الحق أطرا . ولتقصرنه على الحق قصرا زاد في رواية أو ليضرين الله بقلوب بعضكم على بعض . ثم ليلعننكم كما لعنهم

168 Narrated by 'Urs ibn 'Umayrah al-Kindī and recorded by Abū Dāwūd.

إذا عملت الخطيئة في الأرض كان من شاهدها فأنكرها كمن غاب عنها . ومن غاب عنها فرضيها كمن شاهدها.

169 Narrated by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī and transmitted in the Sunan of Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

إن من أعظم الجهاد كلمة عدل عند سلطان جائر.

170 Narrated by Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh and recorded by al-Ḥākīm.

سعيد الشهداء حمزة ورجل قام إلى سلطان جائر فأمره ونهاه فقتله.

171 **Khaybar** – a Jewish settlement north of Madinah. The origins of its Jewish community, as of others in the Ḥijāz may have had to do with advanced Jewish knowledge of the appearance of the “expected” one in Arabia, or it could be that the Arab Semites may have been more tolerant of the Jewish Semitic culture than those who lived in areas north of that, or it may have been initially an area of retreat for persecuted Jews, who after a lapse of generations finally settled into their new homes in Semitic Arabia. In 628CE, Khaybar was liberated by Muhammad (ﷺ) when Arabia’s Yahūd finally expressed their military opposition to Muhammad (ﷺ) and Islam. The Yahūd lost the military battle but were allowed to stay and retain their lands if they so desired, but with the consequence that they had to pay into the budget of the Islamic State in proportion to their wealth.

172 **Sephardi** (plural: Sephardim) – a Jewish descendant of those Jews expelled from Andalusia (Spain and Portugal) in the 15th century CE, or from those forcibly converted to Christianity (Marranos) during the Inquisition. Many settled in the Muslim countries of North Africa and in Mediterranean countries, as well as in the Netherlands, England, and Dutch colonies in the New World. Sephardim speak/spoke *Ladino*, a 15th century Romance dialect, as well as the language of the nation they chose to settle in.

Likud (Hebrew for *unity*) – Israeli political bloc. In the wake of the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Gahal combined with the Free Center, the State party (a remnant of Rafi), and the Eretz Yisrael movement to form Likud. What brought them together was their commitment to incorporating into Israel the Palestinian Arab territories occupied since the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Ideologically, Likud was an alliance of the conservative, capitalist, and ultra-racist trends within secular Zionism. It won 30.2% of the votes (39 seats) in the December 1973 poll and secured 33.4% of the votes (43 seats) in the May 1977 election, becoming the senior partner in the coalition government (including religious parties) headed by its leader, Menachem Begin. It repeated its winning performance in the July 1981 election and secured 47 seats.

Due to Israel’s invasion and occupation of Lebanon in 1982 and its aftermath, resulting in the death of more than 500 soldiers, Likud’s popularity declined. Begin resigned in August 1983 and was succeeded by Yitzhak Shamir. Likud’s share of 41 seats in the 1984 general election was a little more than Labor’s 38. It formed a national unity government with Labor, with its leader becoming prime minister for a two-year term. The same hap-

pened after the 1988 election when, faced with the loss of a further two seats (to 39), Likud agreed to share power with Labor in a national unity government. When this arrangement broke down in March 1990 over the terms of a Middle East peace process, Likud managed to put together a coalition cabinet with the help of Jewish religious and racist parties. In the June 1992 poll, with its share of seats down to 32, it lost power; its leadership passed to Benjamin Netanyahu. After that, Labor took over and tried to maintain national unity under the premiership of Ehud Barak, but when the Aqsa Intifadah broke out, Labor was voted out and Likud was voted back in, this time under the premiership of Ariel Sharon.

173 **Thirty Years War (1618–1648)** – a major war in central Europe. Beginning as a German conflict between Protestants and Catholics, it gradually became a struggle to determine whether the ruling Austrian Hapsburg family would gain control of all Germany. The war caused serious economic and demographic problems in central Europe.

- 1618–1620 – a Bohemian revolt against Austrian rule was defeated. Some Protestant princes continued the struggle against Austria.
- 1625–1627 – Denmark entered the war on the Protestant side.
- 1630 – Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden intervened on the Protestant side, overrunning Northern Germany.
- 1631 – The Catholic commander Tilly stormed Magdeburg (industrial city and capital of Saxony-Anhalt, Germany on the river Elbe).
- 1632 – Tilly was defeated in the Battles of Breitenfeld and the Lech, and was killed. The German general Wallenstein was defeated at the Battle of Lutzen; Gustavus Adolphus was killed.
- 1634 – When the Swedes were defeated at Nordlingen, Richelieu brought France into the war to inflict several defeats on Austria's Spanish allies. Wallenstein was assassinated.
- 1648 – The Treaty of Westphalia gave France Alsace province, and Sweden got certain Baltic provinces, the emperor's authority in Germany becoming only nominal. The mercenary armies of Wallenstein, Tilly, and Mansfeld devastated Germany.

174 Various aspects of social change may be identified as constituent elements of secularization. Chief among these has been the rationalization of social, economic, and political organization, and the supersession of traditional procedures in which scriptural practices and beliefs were often entrenched. The increased division of labor is an example. *Laicization*, which is the transfer of particular responsibilities and functions from institutions grounded in scripture to laymen who are at best ritualistically religious and at worst hostile to God, is closely bound up with secularization and has usually been a more overtly conscious form of it.

laicization – derived from the word *laity*, which itself comes from the Greek word *laos*, meaning *people*. The term is first used in the Epistle of Clement, the early church father. It refers to Christians, members of the church, who are not clergy. The view of the laity as the “people of God” in mission to the world is scriptural and has long been the Protestant understanding of church membership. This is expressed in Martin Luther’s doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers,” which is accepted by most Protestants. The idea of the people of God is now central to the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church, but traditionally and doctrinally Catholicism understands the laity to be those who have membership in the church without authority. The belief expressed in this is that the distinction between laity and clergy is of divine institution. Only the clergy of the highest orders — deacons, priests (or presbyters), and bishops — have governing power in the Church. The laity in the Catholic Church have been incorporated into ruling bodies and given wider ecclesiastical functions since Vatican II, but the clergy-laity distinction is still maintained. The three types of religious associations for laity in the Catholic Church are Third Orders, Confraternities, and Pious Unions.

In Protestantism, laity and clergy share governing power, and lay people play larger roles in ecclesiastical affairs. There is no insistence on the divine institution of holy orders in most Protestant churches. The ministry is seen as an office, a function, for the good order of the church and as a means of carrying out the mission of the church.

175 Health, similarly divested of its spiritual overtones, is no longer dependent on divine sanction or intercessional supplication. Popular recreation has become the concern of several related industries and is no longer subject to religious constraints; and religious bodies themselves are, in today’s West, responsible for only a minor and amateur part of the provision of recreational facilities. This process of differentiation of the various roles of the social system has been accompanied by the separation of religious and secular concerns, and the almost total disappearance of religious influence from these other areas of social organization.

176 Longer-term trends can also be readily discerned. The reaction of the scriptural religions was to rationalize the numerous agencies which sought to associate human relations to the *ghayb* as inaccurate and confused. If, in its interpretation of various matters, religion is broadly defined to include all manifestations of belief in and supplication to supra-material sources, then it can be said that these scriptural religions brought order and cohesion into religious dispositions and actions, thereby establishing a secular realm from which the religious was clearly demarcated and gradually diminished. The sustained onslaught against magic and paganism by the Christian churches was a way of curtailing and rationalizing access to the

ghayb, and hence of considerably secularizing certain areas of social relationships and activities.

In times past, secular authorities have been legitimized by religious agencies, still residually evident in coronations and such ceremonies, and the endorsement of religious leaders has been regularly sought for the execution of particular social policies, including warfare. Recall the presence of Billy Graham at the White House when he gave his blessing to such aggressions as the wars in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf. In the selective and distorted church interpretation of scripture, social control was maintained by a repertoire of supernatural threats — hell, purgatory, and limbo — and promises, such as heaven. In those days knowledge, characterized as “religion and true learning,” and the institutions by which it was disseminated, the universities and monasteries, were the domain of theologians and church leaders. The socialization of children was primarily in the hands of the clergy. Even in the maintenance of health, religious ministry was prominent, particularly in the provision of infirmaries and hospitals. The Church also tried to regulate recreational activities. In all of these areas, religious authority has long since given way to secular mandates.

coronation — a ceremony of investing a sovereign with the emblems of royalty, as a symbol of inauguration in office.

177 **privatization** — the restriction of the influence of Christianity to the private lives of individuals; yet even in this limited sphere Christianity no longer has free rein. The operation of modern society increasingly depends on the refined division of labor and a structure of roles, particularly in economic activities. The expansion of role systems has been a major manifestation of rationalization, as human activities have become more specialized and coordinated into an essentially impersonal system of relationships. This development has removed from modern forms of social organization much of the personal affinity by which relationships were characterized in more communally organized societies. Christianity was readily capable of infusing with spiritual values the relationships that prevailed in that older order, but that capacity diminished once society became role-articulated. *Rationalization*, by which men are reduced to the equivalent of machine parts within their societies, has been a powerful agent of secularization on the individual level.

The decline in voluntary allegiance to Christian beliefs and support for Christian organizations provides some evidence of secularization, even though it is not the central part of the phenomenon. In Britain, and in Europe generally, there has been in recent decades a decline in the numbers professing belief in God — and even more particularly belief in a personal God — and in an afterlife. Confessions, confirmations, and baptisms have

been on the decline in almost all predominantly Christian countries, albeit at different rates. In Britain, many Anglican and nonconformist churches have closed, while the number of clergy has fallen both absolutely and relative to the population. Anglicans and Catholics alike find new entrants difficult to recruit and, once recruited, to retain, so that the average age of the clergy in Western Europe is steadily increasing.

Sociologists have developed the concept of the internal secularization of Christianity, alluding to the departure from older doctrinal, liturgical, and ethical traditions. Thus the idea of God as exacting father and judge and of people as inherently sinful has lost currency as the secular culture has shifted from paternalism to fraternalism. The high cultural form of liturgy has been replaced by use of the vernacular in worship and freedom of spontaneous ecstatic expression in charismatic renewal — a movement sharing something of the ethos of the simultaneously emerging secular hippy movement, which also originated in California. The traditional ascetic ethic, which encouraged men and women to forsake gratifications in this world in order to accumulate reward in the next, has given way to teachings more precisely accommodated to the hedonism of contemporary secular society.

confession – a term that has many meanings in biblical and Judeo-Christian tradition. In a sense, it differs little from the idea of *profess*, that is, *admit*, *acknowledge*, and *own up to*. Thus the summations of key doctrines professed by various churches have been termed *confessions*. The revelation or publication of personal experiences testifying to some spiritual development whether of faith or doubt often bear the title *confessions*. Confession in the more general and popular usage remains the one most familiar today, that is, the acknowledgment of one's sinfulness, a profession of guilt in petition of forgiveness. Confession of sins, whether of an individual or on behalf of the whole nation, was assumed to be the indispensable condition for forgiveness, whether the sin in question was one of forgetfulness, human frailty, or outright malice. In Christianity, before there could be reconciliation between God and humans, it was necessary for man to acknowledge that what separated the two had a moral dimension: then only could the gulf be bridged — thus the significance of the expression *knowledge of God*, which was common to Hosea, Isaiah, and other prophets (Hosea, 4:1; Romans, 11:33). Hence, to know God truly is to recognize this moral division and therefore need to confess it. Confession, together with ritual, was sufficient to purge the sinner of inadvertent sins, but for absolution from greater crimes confession could only be a means of appealing to the mercy of God.

It is taken for granted also in the New Testament that there can be no forgiveness of sins unless the sin is frankly acknowledged (1 John, 1:9, for example). According to Acts, 19:18–19 public confession was taken to be a

routine measure to rectify a grave disorder in the Christian community. In James, 5:16 there even seems to be the attempt to institutionalize confession.

confirmation – part of the Christian rites of initiation. The word *confirmation* means *strengthening*. It has two referents. Confirmation has been interpreted as bringing an added grace of the Holy Spirit beyond that received in baptism to strengthen the believer in living the Christian faith. The word may also refer to the fact that the person is confirming the promises made in his or her behalf by sponsors at the time of baptism.

baptism – meaning to *dip* in Greek; immersion in or sprinkling with water as a religious Christian rite of initiation. It was practiced long before the beginning of Christianity according to some sources. In the Christian baptism ceremony, sponsors or godparents make vows on behalf of the child, which are renewed by the child during confirmation. It is one of the seven sacraments. The *ambit ceremony* in Sikhism is sometimes referred to as baptism. Baptism was universal in the Christian Church from the first days, being administered to adults by immersion. The baptism of infants was not practiced until the 2nd century, but became common by the 6th. Baptism by sprinkling (christening) water at a time when the child is named is now general among Western Christians, with the exception of some sects (notably the Baptists) where complete immersion of adults is the rule. The Eastern Orthodox Church also practices immersion.

- 178 Julie Wiener, *Facing sex accusations, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman quits* (San Francisco, CA: jweekly.com website, December 8, 2000).
<http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/14659/facing-sex-accusations-rabbi-sheldon-zimmerman-quits/>

- 179 Sometimes it is difficult to focus on the psychology of these “scripturalist” evaders simply because information about them is selectively taken out of the public domain. But to further understand how this psychology is condemned by holy words, consider another case. A rabbi, convicted of having his wife bludgeoned to death so he could carry on an affair with a radio-show hostess, was sentenced in 2003 to life in prison. Rabbi Fred J. Neulander, 61, was found guilty of arranging the 1994 murder of his wife, Carol. It was his second trial; the first ended in a hung jury in 2001. At the sentencing, the rabbi, who once lead southern New Jersey’s largest Jewish congregation, delivered a 20-minute speech professing his innocence. “I cannot express remorse for something I did not do,” he said. He initially asked Judge Linda Baxter to let him skip the sentencing hearing, but Judge Baxter rejected the request, saying that hearing what others had to say about him was part of his punishment. All three of Mrs. Neulander’s siblings spoke, and letters from two of the

rabbi's three grown children were read. Both children accused him of taking away a grandmother from their infant children. In pronouncing the sentence, Judge Baxter said she was penalizing rabbi Neulander for "conduct that is so cold and calculating that it sends shivers down the spine of any civilized person" (<http://www.southjerseynews.com/neulander/m011703a.htm>).

On another level, 14 members of an ultra-orthodox Jewish Hasidic community were charged with racketeering in March 2001. According to a 68-count indictment in federal court in White Plains, New York, the defendants, based in the Hasidic village of Kiryas Joel in Orange County, 40 miles northwest of New York City, had cheated individuals, banks, and insurance companies out of millions of dollars in "myriad" financial frauds since 1996. They solicited individuals for bogus lotteries, defrauded banks with counterfeit checks, submitted false death claims to insurance companies and used false information to get tax refunds. Again, financial avarice is another sin for which churches, synagogues, and leaders in the US have repeatedly been found guilty (<http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys/pressreleases/June03/samet222sentence.pdf>).

180 **Shass** – acronym for *Shomrei Torah Sephardim* (*Sephardi Torah Guardians*); an ultra-religious quasi-Zionist Sephardi party established before the elections to the 11th Knesset (1984) in protest over the inappropriate representation of the Sephardi sector in the Agudat Yisrael list. Ex-Sephardi Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who is Shass' spiritual leader and Head of the seven member Mo'etzet Hachmei Hatorah (Council of Torah Sages) was joined by the Lithuanian Rabbi Eliezer Shach, one of the leaders of Mo'etzet G'dolei Hatorah (Council of Great Torah Scholars), and together they led Shass to the telling achievement of four Knesset seats while Agudat Yisrael went down from four to only two. Shass also took voters away from the Moroccan party Tami, and gained the support of many *ba'alei tshuvah* (penitents) who view Rabbi Shach as their spiritual leader. Shass has a fundamentalist approach to religion and state, wanting Israel to become a Halacha (Jewish law) state. Its political leader, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, was Minister of the Interior in the National Unity Government until December 1986. He resigned over the issue of registering as a Jewess, as prescribed by the High Court of Justice, a woman who had been converted to Judaism by a Reform rabbi in the USA.

181 This is referring to *kāfir* elements within Ahl al-Kitāb; it does not suggest that all members of Ahl al-Kitāb (People of the Book) — Christians and Jews — are *kāfirs*.

182 In a report released near the end of 2002, the Saudis detailed numerous measures they had taken since the 9/11 attacks to keep better track of charities and prevent their funds from going to al-Qaeda and other unauthorized

organizations. The steps included ordering financial audits of Saudi charities; creating a government agency to oversee their activities; setting up a new financial intelligence unit to monitor the movement of charitable funds; and establishing new rules for sending humanitarian donations outside the country. The Saudi report said that since 9/11, Riyadh had frozen 33 suspicious accounts, together worth \$5.6 million, belonging to three individuals. One of those individuals, according to Adel al-Jubeir, now the Saudi Ambassador to the US, was Yasin al-Qadi, a Saudi millionaire and philanthropist who had been listed by US officials as a terrorist financier. In statements made at the same time, designed to endear the kingdom to those who hold deep-seated animosity toward the Muslims, Saudi officials said that since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Saudi regime had questioned more than 2,000 people about possible ties to al-Qaeda and imprisoned more than 100 people. Praising President Bush for saying the war on terrorism is not an attack on Muslims, a spokesman at the Saudi embassy in Washington described George W. Bush as “a God-fearing man, an honorable man.”

In response, officials of the US State and Treasury departments praised Saudi cooperation in the “war on terror.” “We very much applaud the Saudi efforts,” Treasury spokeswoman Michele Davis said. Of a total \$3–4 billion in Saudi annual charitable donations, only about 10% is sent overseas, al-Jubeir said. Although the government has found no evidence that money is flowing directly from Saudi individuals or organizations to “terrorists,” al-Jubeir said, he acknowledged some of the contributions may have indirectly or “inadvertently” ended up in terrorist coffers. US government officials and terrorism experts acknowledged that the Saudis must tread lightly in moving against Muslim charities because of anti-American and anti-Jewish currents in Saudi society and the high regard many Saudis have for Muslim freedom-fighters. After seeing the Saudi *sajdah* in the niche of *kufri*, one cannot help but ask whether the Saudis ever read the Qur’an with a view to give them strength against the threat of subjugation? And while the Saudis have gone out of their way to earn American approval, the US government continues to slap the Saudis in the face. In the same week that the Abū Jahls and Abū Lahabs of modern Arabia reported to their American superiors of their success in fighting Islamic self-determination, President Bush signed into law the Defense Authorization Act, containing a provision that bans the US military from requiring female soldiers deployed in Saudi Arabia to wear Islamic dress.

183 Qorvis Communications source:

Sari Horwitz and Dan Eggen, *FBI Searches Saudi Arabia's PR Firm*.

(Washington, DC: Washington Post, News (A) section, December 9, 2004), p. A8.

Hill and Knowlton source:

Mitchel Cohen, "What We Say, Goes!" *How Bush Sr. Sold the Bombing of Iraq*. (Petrolia, CA: Counterpunch.org website, December 28, 2002).
<http://www.counterpunch.org/cohen1228.html>

184 Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, *Inside the Ring*. (Washington, DC: TheGertzFile website, January 3, 2003).
<http://www.gertzfile.com/gertzfile/ring010303.html>

185 Alan Cooperman, *Robertson Calls Islam a Religion of Violence, Mayhem*. (Washington, DC: Washington Post, News (A) section, February 22, 2002).

Pat Robertson (1930–present) – built the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) in Virginia Beach, which annually can collect up to \$97 million in clear, tax-free profit. Within the CBN, he created the Family Channel, the USA's seventh largest cable network, featuring Robertson's popular talk show, *The 700 Club*, which according to writer Robert Boston, "is as much about politics as it is religion." In 1997, Robertson sold the Family Channel to Fox Television for \$1.9 billion. In his biography of Robertson, *The Most Dangerous Man in America? Pat Robertson and the Rise of the Christian Coalition*, Boston points out that money garnered by tax-exempt religious broadcasts financed or provided the seed money for other projects, including those of a political nature, especially the Christian Coalition. "With a \$25 million annual budget, the Christian Coalition claims to have 1.7 million members and 1,600 local affiliates and chapters in all 50 states. The Christian Coalition arguably is the single most influential political organization in the US," Boston reports.



Robertson, a consistent defender of the late President-Dictator Mobutu of Zaire, owns a Zaire diamond mine as well as Operation Blessing, a tax-exempt charity organization that provides airplane flights around the world. In 1999, Virginia State Senator Janet D. Howell challenged the exemption given to the organization after Operation Blessing pilots reported that some planes "were used primarily to take equipment to a diamond mine" owned by Robertson.

By 1999, Robertson, who ran for US president in 1988, was moving on to becoming chairman of a big bank. His planned new national bank, affiliated with the Bank of Scotland, would have no branches, but instead deal with customers by telephone and mail. He used the same model for accepting donations to his Christian Broadcasting Network and his political arm, the Christian Coalition. According to a March 3, 1999 *New York Times* arti-

cle, Robertson will be “a very significant minority shareholder” and will be chairman of its American holding company.

In 1982, Israel sent tanks and invaded its northern neighbor, Lebanon; Ariel Sharon led the attack. Pat Robertson rode into the fray in an Israeli jeep. In the ensuing war, Israel killed and wounded 200,000 Lebanese and Palestinians, most of them civilians. In waging the war on its neighbor, Israel, said Robertson, was doing God’s will.

Jerry Falwell, Sr. (1933–2007) – American religious leader, born in Lynchburg, Virginia. After studying at Baptist Bible College in Missouri, he was ordained a Baptist minister. In 1956, he founded Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, which became the basis of an extensive evangelical campaign. He was also responsible for founding the Moral Majority, Inc., an organization that aims to mobilize millions of Americans to work for pro-God, pro-family policies in government, and Liberty University. From November 1979 through July 1980, the Moral Majority and other Christian organizations registered 2.5 million new voters. Their goal for election day in 1980 was to register a total of five million new Christian voters. The Moral Majority has two arms: one for lobbying, one for education. This organization says it does not directly help candidates, but it will give politically concerned Christians a way to meet and work with each other. And conservative Christians can be very effective in a political campaign.



The foundation of the Moral Majority is fundamentalist Protestants, in particular the estimated 15 million Americans who watch such TV programs as the *700 Club* regularly. More than 20 years ago Reverend Falwell had two million names on his “Gospel Hour” mailing list.

Dr. Falwell and his peers have been preoccupied with building a coalition of not only his own religious followers but of Catholics, Jews and Mormons. Significantly, New Right leaders Paul Weyrich, an Eastern Rite Catholic, and Howard Phillips, a Jew, worked closely with Falwell in setting up the Moral Majority. The potential of such a development is wide-ranging. There are an estimated 85 million Americans — 50 million “born-again Protestants,” 30 million morally conservative Catholics, 3 million Mormons and 2 million Orthodox and Conservative Jews — with whom this anti-Islamic, religio-political idea can gel. Church leaders acknowledge that overcoming age-old suspicions among Catholics, Protestants, and Jews will not be easy. But today’s developments in and around the Holy Land and Jerusalem have rendered the US government a catalyst for overpowering those age-old suspicions.

- 186 Dan Eggen, *Ashcroft Invokes Religion In U.S. War on Terrorism*. (Washington, DC: Washington Post, News (A) section, February 20, 2002).
- 187 Such attacks on Muslims and Islam appear to have provoked no significant response from the United States' Muslim "friends" and "allies," such as the Saudis. Nor was there any great reaction when a former leader of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Reverend Jerry Vines, called the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) a "demon-possessed pedophile." Some Saudi 'alims and mouthpieces may have turned up the anti-American rhetoric; but did any of them withdraw the thousands of billions of dollars they have in American banks and financial institutions, or threaten to cash the bonds that make it possible for Mr. Vines to have his daily bread? After 9/11, in the early days that followed, President Bush hypocritically postured as a president who discriminates between Islam and the terrorists, reassuring the world that America was not at war with Islam or Muslims. He even visited the Islamic Center in Washington, DC, to be photographed with "Muslim" religious functionaries, who stood by him in a pose of humility. The image of "Muslims" standing next to the modern-day Pharaoh says more than a thousand pages.
- 188 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm (better known as Tafsīr al-Manār)*, Volume 4. (Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Ma'rifaḥ, 1414AH), p. 68.

Glossary

Ahl al-Kitāb – *Folks of the Book (also People of the Book)*; this expression refers to people who belong or belonged to any of a number of holy books or scriptures that were revealed by Allah (ﷻ) to the Prophets (ﷺ) throughout the course of history. Most notably among them are “Jews” and “Christians” who still have an affinity with or a “working relationship” with the Bible — Old or New Testaments.

ākhirah – *the end-life or afterlife*; this expression refers to the here-after, or afterlife, or life after death. In a more refined sense, this word alludes to the time-period that will follow the Day of Resurrection and Judgment.

akhlūqu – *I shall create*; the linguistic meaning refers to the human ability (usually a prophet) to do what is regarded to be impossible.

akmah – *refers to a person who was born blind.*

āl – *intimates, confidantes.*

‘alim – an Islamic scholar.

āmīn – we consent to, approve of, and are committed to what was said.

al-amr bi-al-ma‘rūf wa-nahy ‘an al-munkar – to demand and authorize what is self-evidently right and to deconstruct and decommission what is self-evidently obnoxious.

Anṣār – supporters; in Islamic literature this word has to be understood in context. It could occur in reference to the Almighty or it could be in reference to the Prophet (ﷺ).

al-‘aql al-kullī – the universal intellect.

awqāf – plural of *waqf*.

āyah – demonstration; this could refer to Allah’s (ﷻ) demonstration through revelation, that is, the verse(s) of the Generous Qur’an; and it can also refer to Allah’s (ﷻ) demonstration of power and authority in the course of prophetic and social history. Plural for *āyah* is *āyāt*.

āyāt muḥkamāt – clear, unambiguous, and unequivocal; this refers to the *āyāt* in the Qur’an that are unmistakable — they do not tolerate alternative meanings or interpretations. They are referred to in scholarly circles as *umm al-kitāb* — the genesis and the foundation of the Book.

āyāt mutashābihāt – similar and comparable in meaning, or also allegorical and inferential in meaning; this refers to the *āyāt* that tolerate a human immature or developing understanding.

al-‘Azīz – the Impregnable, the Almighty, and the Inviolable; one of the attributes of Allah (ﷻ).

baghyan baynahum – aggression and hostility toward each other.

bakhin – approval, admiration, and gratification.

barā'ah – disavowal, absolution from any liabilities; alternate name given to *Sūrah al-Tawbah*.

dhillah – chagrin.

dīn – pattern and prototype; this word is probably one of the most mistranslated words. The usual translation of the word is *religion*. But in a better understanding of Islamic terms the word *dīn* should carry within its meaning a lively prototype and a social system. As such a *dīn* could be man-made and in denial of Allah (ﷻ) or it may be in conformity with Allah (ﷻ) and in affirmation of Him.

dīnār – gold currency at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ); today, approximately 4.25 grams of gold.

du'ā' – prayer or a reverent petition to Allah (ﷻ).

dunyā – the worldly life.

fāsiq – degenerate, decomposed; this term usually is used in reference to human beings who initially commit themselves to Allah (ﷻ) and His Prophet (ﷺ) but then later during the details of social struggle show an elemental or visceral tendency to quit from the tasks and demands of such a struggle as it peaks. This failure of theirs is a failure of nerve and resolve at an *instinctual* level. The plural is *fāsiqūn*. The word *fusūq* is the noun, meaning *decomposition* or *decay*.

fath – literally, a breakthrough; liberation from oppression and injustice.

fatwa – an Islamic legal opinion.

fiqh – practical knowledge, legal knowledge, jurisprudence; the moral and legal understanding and interpretation of Islamic norms and laws within a particular generation or set of circumstances.

fiqhī – of or pertaining to *fiqh*.

fitnaḥ – trial and temptation, affliction; mainstream public opinion contradicting the truth and justice; seduction, sedition.

fitraḥ – man’s God-given state of nature.

ghayb – unseen, unknown, metaphysical, incomprehensible.

hadith – a verbal or practical precedent of the Prophet (ﷺ); the simple linguistic meaning of the word is “speech.”

al-Hadith – the full body of hadith literature of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Hajj – the Pilgrimage; this is the annual meeting of the Muslims in Makkah during the last three months of the lunar year: Shawwāl, Dhū al-Qa‘daḥ, and Dhū al-Ḥijjah. The mass assembly of people during this annual congregation is Yawm ‘Arafāt, which is the 9th day of Dhū al-Ḥijjah — the day before ‘Īd al-Aḍḥá.

al-Ḥakīm – the Wise, the Prudent, and the Knowledgeable; one of the attributes of Allah (ﷻ).

ḥamida – literally, to praise, exalt, or extol.

ḥaqq – truth, veracity, validity.

ḥawāriyyūn – helpers, followers, disciples; the pre-critical mass of human support that is necessary for the Will of Allah (ﷻ) to be actuated; these were the inner circle of ‘Īsá (ﷺ).

hawzaḥ – a [Shī‘ī] religious seminary.

hijrī – referring to the Hijrah, or more generally to the Islamic calendar and the dates organized according to its lunar pattern of timekeeping.

ikhrāj – literally, to move out and go forth; a merging and a fusion into the world's human and social reality.

ilāhanā – our Deity, our God, our Authority.

imāmah – the Islamic leadership of the Islamic State; used interchangeably in this *tafsīr* with *khilāfah* and *imārah*.

imān – secure commitment, covenant; the word is virtually a distillation of *amānah* (trust) and *amn* (security).

imārah – see *imāmah*.

inshā'allāh – if Allah (ﷻ) wills, decrees, or wants.

intifādah – literally, an outpouring, an inundation (like from a flood); mass resistance and protest.

islām – resignation/yielding; this is a relationship with Allah (ﷻ) more than it is a religion. And it defines individuals and people who acquiesce and adhere to the will of Allah (ﷻ). Like other Qur'anic words, its specific meaning is refined within the context it is in. Generally speaking, it may be understood to refer to the “civic character” or “civilian status” of people once there is a full and meaningful *taqwā*-type orderliness with associated rules.

jāhili – of or pertaining to *jāhiliyah*.

jāhiliyah – an era of governance without God, the age of systemic lack of scriptural guidance; it may be characterized as an “ignocracy” or “idiocracy.” It not only refers to the time preceding Muhammad (ﷺ), but also any time period in which Allah's (ﷻ) *dīn* is overrun by other systems and establishments.

jamā'ah – aggregation/congregation; in a more exacting sense, it is the quorum of Muslims needed for a particular task or obligation.

jihad – *the ultimate effort and sacrifice; it is not holy war.* The word has a range of meanings and applications that range from a struggle against the forces of evil within the self to the a struggle against the forces of evil within the cosmos.

jinn – *unseen, intelligent beings; this is an independent species of intelligent and advanced life that will be held accountable, like humans, on the Day of Judgment.* Their composition is from the substance of the fire, whereas man’s composition is from the substance of clay.

jizyah – *a compensation or reward for services rendered, usually associated with a greater reward in the hereafter; the fee or tribute paid by non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic State who have entered into a treaty of protection with the Muslims.*

Jumu‘ah – *the sixth day of the week, Friday; the day of the week in which Muslims assemble for their weekly congregational sermon and service.*

Ka‘bah – *a cubic structure, an object of veneration; the black enshrouded cube at the center of al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, originally built by Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl (ﷺ) and around which Muslim pilgrims perform their ṭawāf (circumambulation).*

kāfir – *a contrarian to Allah (ﷻ); every person who enlists in kufr becomes a kāfir.* Plurals are *kāfirūn, kāfirīn, and kuffār.*

karāmah – *a favor, an honor.*

khalifah – *successor; this word has its Qur’anic context.* In this context man/humans are designated as Allah’s (ﷻ) successors on earth. In post-prophetic Islamic literature it refers to those who succeeded the Prophet (ﷺ) as the leader of the Muslims.

khalil – *confidant.*

khāṭīb – a person who delivers a sermon or lecture.

khayr – goodness, merit, excellence, grace.

khilāfah – successorship; Caliphate.

khuṭbah – sermon, discourse, lecture.

kitāb – the divine Writ; this word, in the context of the Qur’an, refers to the specific Qur’an itself while in other places it refers to generic scripture. The context in which it is used “fine-tunes” its meaning.

kitābī – a follower of scripture.

kufr – denial of Allah’s (ﷻ) authority and power; this becomes a “philosophy” or an “ideology.” There is a mental construct of ideas that argue against Allah (ﷻ) as Sovereign, Lawgiver, and Authority. There may be many expressions of this contrarian hypothesis and political orientation; but one thing in common among all of them — bar none — is their exclusion of Allah (ﷻ) as the Almighty and the ultimate Authority.

ma‘rūf – that which is self-evidently right and proper.

madrasah – an Islamic primary school dedicated in part to the study and memorization of the Qur’an; erroneously referred to by the mushrik media, politicians, and academics as terror indoctrination centers for young Muslim minds.

maḥram – one with whom marriage is proscribed.

masjid – the place or area of sujūd (prostrations); a mosque.

maskanaḥ – bewilderment.

millāh – constituency, or the people of a country, or a community of persons bound by a common heritage; most of the time this word is used in the Qur’an to refer to the consolidating of the popular will around Abraham and his Prophetic descendants (ﷺ).

mīzān – a measuring scale, a balance.

mu’min – every person who is firmly and securely committed to Allah (ﷻ); a bearer of *īmān*. See *īmān* above.

mubāhalaḥ – a joint invocation of prayers on liars; this term in Islamic history summons Muslims and Christians to an “interfaith” denunciation of whomever is wrong in their characterization of ‘Īsā ibn Maryam (Jesus, the son of Mary (ﷺ)).

mufassir – exegetist; one who explains the meanings of the Qur’an. The plural is *mufassirūn*.

Muhājirūn – people forced out of their homelands; in particular, these are people who are forced out because of their scriptural convictions, strenuous efforts, and energetic attempts at socializing scripture. Generally in Islamic literature, this term refers to the Prophet’s (ﷺ) companions who made the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah.

al-Muḥarram – the first month of the Islamic calendar.

muḥkam – see *āyāt muḥkamāt*.

mujāhid – an individual active in *jihād*; see *jihād* above. Its plural is *mujāhidūn* or *mujāhidīn*.

munāfiq – a dual loyalist; those “Muslims” who are outwardly performing their part in a ritual Islam, but when it comes time to honor this Islam in its struggle and sacrifices, they show inclination towards the anti-Islamic camps, states or powers around. They feign

Islam, while in reality they owe their allegiance to the representatives of *kufr*. See also *nifāq*.

munkar – that which is self-evidently objectionable and offensive.

mushrik – an individual(s) and people(s) who actively diminish the authority of Allah (ﷻ) and promote the authority of others; feminine: *mushrikah*; feminine plural: *mushrikāt*. They equate worldly powers with Allah (ﷻ) and they denigrate Allah (ﷻ) as “one among many” deities and authorities.

mutashābih – see *āyāt mutashābihāt*.

mutawaffika – causing to go into a decrease in the manifestation of life; refer to *yatawaffā* below.

muttaqī – one who is actively conscious of Allah’s (ﷻ) power presence and hence is always on the alert and on the defensive pertaining to Allah (ﷻ); this word should never be translated as *pious* or *fearful*, as it is known nowadays.

naṣīḥah – sincere advice.

nastaghfir-allāh – We ask Allah (ﷻ) for forgiveness.

ni‘mah – bounty, blessing, favor.

nifāq – disloyalty, hypocrisy, feigning allegiance.

al-qā‘idah – foundation and rule; ledger, database.

qaḍā’ – a make-up *ṣalāh* for one that was missed in its appropriate time.

qiblah – the accommodating and unifying center that attracts the Muslims in their time of *ṣalāh* and devotional services. The Muslims’ *qiblah* is Makkah.

al-ra'īs al-mu'min – the believing or faithful president.

rabb – sustainer, provider. The word is either used to refer to God or to a person in a providing or decision-making capacity such as an employer, a head of household, or a king.

rabbānā – Oh our Lord, our Sustainer! This form of address is usually employed in a supplication.

raf' – raising or elevation of status.

Rasūl-Allah – the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ); generally referring to Muhammad (ﷺ).

ribā – usury; a particular type of nefarious and vicious financial transaction that generates money from lending money.

riḍḍah – a regression into jāhiliyah after freely agreeing to yield to Allah's (ﷻ) commandments.

rūḥ – vital essence, soulfulness.

Rūḥ al-Qudus – the archangel Gabriel (ﷺ).

Ṣaḥīḥ(s) of various scholars – the compilation of hadiths collected by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, al-Nisā'i, al-Tirmidhī, and others.

sajdah – prostration; plural: *sujūd*. This is one of the motions of *ṣalāh*, when a praying Muslim puts his forehead on the ground and glorifies the Almighty.

ṣalāh – expressing a concentrated and devotional relationship with Allah (ﷻ); Muslims do this five times a day: *Fajr*, *Zuḥr*, *'Aṣr*, *Maghrib*, and *'Ishā'*.

al-salāmu ‘alaykum – *peace be unto you.*

al-sāmu ‘alaykum – *poison or death upon you.*

ṣawm – *abstaining from appetite tendencies (such as food, conversation, etc.); fasting.* Plural: *ṣiyām.*

shahādaḥ – *testimonial*; like other words, the variation in meaning depends on the context the word is used in. This word refers mostly to two concepts in Islamic literature. The first is the article of faith: *Ashhadu an lā ilāha illa Allah, wa ashhadu anna Muḥammadan rasūlu Allah*, which means “I bear witness [testify] that there is no deity/authority [worthy of conformity] except Allah, and I bear witness [testify] that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” The second concept related to the word *shahādaḥ* is *martyrdom.*

shahīd – *martyr.*

Shari‘ah – *the Islamic legal system.*

shar‘ī – *of or pertaining to the Shari‘ah.* When this refers to the definition of certain words, it alludes to a specific meaning derived from the Shari‘ah; for instance, the word *ṣalāḥ* literally means *blessing*, but its *shar‘ī* meaning refers to the physical and mental communion with Allah (ﷻ) that Muslims are required to perform five times a day.

Shawwāl – *the tenth month of the Islamic calendar.*

shirk – *equating or juxtaposing other powers and authorities with the divinity and authority of Allah (ﷻ).*

Sīraḥ – *biography of the Prophet (ﷺ);* this is an account of his lifetime, particularly its struggle aspect, during his years in Makkah and Madinah.

ṣīrāt – refers to *al-ṣīrāt al-mustaqīm*; see below.

al-ṣīrāt al-mustaqīm – *the straight span*; this is in reference to man’s meaningful and directional journey to Allah (ﷻ) during his life-long efforts and movements. It is a phrase used in every *ṣalāh* to focus a Muslim’s attention on the fact that he/she is pursuing a path that “leads to God.”

ṣiyām – *plural of ṣawm*.

sunan – *plural of sunnah*.

sunnah – *social laws (of divine origin)*. This is the word’s Qur’anic meaning in so far as such laws are the pattern of history, human activities, and nature. *Sunan* also refers to a compilation of hadith collected and organized by a *muḥaddith*, one who searches hadith literature with a view to organizing and verifying hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Sunnah, the – *the lifestyle pattern of the Prophet (ﷺ)*; or the final set of social laws imparted by Allah (ﷻ) to humanity through the agency of Muhammad (ﷺ).

sūrah – *ensemble of a body of themes in the Qur’an*; there are 114 *sūrah*s in the Glorious Qur’an.

tā’ifah – *a faction, partisan group*.

ta’wīl – *superseding meaning*; this word is usually used when the human mind does not have a definitive, graphic or precise understanding of an *āyah* — the *āyah* is open to competing meanings, thus the superseding meaning, the primary meaning, or the original meaning is referred (at least for the historical interim) to Allah (ﷻ).

tafsīr – *exegesis*; simple interpretation or critical interpretation of the meanings of the Qur’an.

tāghūt – concentration and abuse of power; this word is usually used to describe governments and regimes that, having accumulated wealth and resources, find themselves in a “superpower” or “hyperpower” position in the world. The exercise of this kind of centralized power makes these governments rivals (in their own consciousness) to the power and authority of Allah (ﷻ). This aggregation and engrossment of power becomes satanic.

tāghūti – adjective referring to *tāghūt*.

tanzīl – expressed or denotative meaning; refers to the specific revelation received by the Prophets (ﷺ), but not the inferred meaning of some of the *āyāt*.

taqīyah – dissimulation.

taqwá – the feeling and thinking of Allah’s (ﷻ) immediate power presence in the affairs of man that makes a person avoid Allah’s (ﷻ) corrective interference in man’s individual and social life.

tattaqū – the collective or societal behavior of having *taqwá*.

tawhīd – monotheism, singular divine authority; this combines in its connotational and denotational meanings all the consolidated and indivisible traits and understandings of Allah (ﷻ). In *His* self *He* is one; in *His* attributes *He* is one; therefore, in any way the human mind tries to understand *Him*, *He* remains exalted — as *He* distinguishes *Himself* in *His* own words.

tu‘izzu – You esteem.

tudhillu – You disgrace.

umm al-kitāb – see *āyāt muḥkamāt*.

ummaḥ – the consolidation of a collective will.

Ummah, the – (uppercase reference is always to) the Islamic ummah.

‘Umrah – the lesser Hajj: attending the Sacred Sanctuary in Makkah in a state of *iḥrām*, circling the Ka‘bah, and jogging between *al-Ṣafā* and *al-Marwah* (no standing at ‘Arafāt is required).

walāyah – interpreted to be devotion to Imam ‘Alī’s family and hatred of their adversaries (this definition specifically pertains to the context of the ‘Alawīs).

waqf – a public endowment administered by the Islamic State for the public benefit.

yatawaffá – a conscious but not biological withdrawal from life.

Yathribī – having to do with Yathrib — the name of the city of Madinah before the Prophet (ﷺ) arrived there.

al-zahrawayn – the two luminous ones; refers to *Sūrah*s *al-Baqarah* and *Āl ‘Imrān*.

zakāh – freely paying money as an act of financial maturity; usually the word is translated as *almsgiving* or *charity*, which not at all renders correctly its original meaning. Many times in the divine Writ the word *zakāh* is preceded by *aqāma*, *yuqīmūna*..., which means that this giving of money has to be institutionalized or regulated.

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